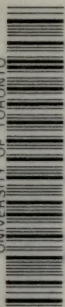
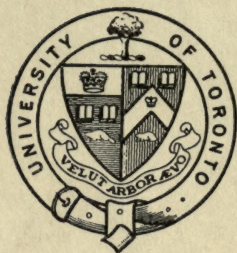


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She came and stood before him—tall and graceful
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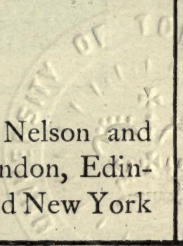


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SELAH HARRISON.

WHEN Arthur Napier returned from the South Seas he told his father of his meeting with the missionary.

After they had talked long about him, it appeared that the missionary must have been that same Selah Harrison whom Arthur's father remembered as a boy.

"He was a brave man," said Arthur.

"He was a young scapegrace when I knew him," said his father.

And together they told each other the story of Selah Harrison. But the story of the miniature Arthur never told.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

SELAH and Samson were the only children of Jacob Harrison and Marjorie, his wife. Jacob was an upright man, of slow speech and quiet face, who did good by stealth, and walked humbly all his life. His wife was a woman of determination, with one frailty—her younger son; and one deception—the concealment of her Christian name. It had always been a grief to Marjorie that she was not called by a more Biblical appellation, for she was a serious woman, whose outward adorning consisted not in the braiding of the hair, nor in the putting on of apparel, and it vexed her greatly that so carnal a name as Marjorie should ever have been given her. Accordingly, she signed herself "M. Harrison" only, hoping that it might appear to stand for Martha or Miriam. But that she did so was a point of contest between Marjorie and her conscience till the day of her death.

In the Border Country, where railways are few, and people think slowly, and prejudices are almost as firmly established as the surrounding hills, it happens that one may meet simple folk like the Harrisons. Born and bred on their own land, they maintained a simple dignity of life, unaltered by modern ideas; and their religion was of the old-fashioned Bible sort, which still held in country places some fifty years ago. Evening prayer was read night by night in the large, comfortable "front room" of the Harrisons' house, and it would have been bad weather indeed that prevented any one of the family walking three miles to and from chapel in Melbury every Sunday. The Covenanters' old burning realization of religion, and their stern distinction between good and evil, was still traceable in the ideas and thoughts of these Border folk; and such subjects as Predestination, Election, Fore-ordination, and Selection were matters of lively belief and daily conversation among them. There was no dallying with Scripture here—no half-truths, no hair-splitting. Either you were saved or you were not saved. Either you served God or you served Mammon. And Mammon was a distinctly defined thing. It consorted chiefly in

large towns; it went to theatres and dances; it dressed in gay colours; it could not inherit the kingdom of Heaven. The boys, Selah and Samson, had been brought up in the uncompromising faith of their fathers; but from physical causes, perhaps, as much as from anything else, the two lads had grown up very unlike one another in character as well as in appearance.

Selah Harrison was a strong-legged, lusty-voiced boy, with red cheeks and a huge appetite. But Samson was a meagre child. His little black coat hung on lean shoulders, and his boots never seemed to have any connection at all with the thin ankles which they encased. All Selah's early recollections of his brother were of a pale-faced boy who sat in a chair by the fire, and coughed in a bronchial manner, and read the Bible.

Chiefly, Samson loved to read the Bible aloud; and when he was interrupted by a fit of coughing, he would, at its conclusion, look round at the little company, as though waiting for applause, in a way which never failed to call forth tears to his mother's eyes, and an admiring "Dear, dear now," from Jacob.

Poor Samson! he did not sit in the little chair

by the fire and cough and read the Bible for long. He died at the age of thirteen—just when it seemed that he was becoming stronger, and would live to grow up to man's estate.

It was during the last two years of his life, when he appeared much like other boys, and could go to school and join in games, that he so sorely tried his brother Selah's patience. During his earlier invalid days he was surrounded with an air of mystery in Selah's eyes. An invalid was a strange being, necessarily religious, and awesome to think about at night. And Selah had always treated Samson with the reverence that he seemed to expect. Night after night, during evening worship, he had applauded Samson's cough, and had listened patiently to those passages of Scripture which were considered useful to any one in his unregenerate state. He had not resented the emphasis with which these passages were read at him; nor had he done more than fidget uneasily in his chair when his mother added to their application, "Listen to that, Selah, and try to profit by what Samson says."

Samson would be "taken early," that was what his mother said; and Samson himself often re-

marked that he only cared to live to see Selah converted. His own conversion—which he considered on an exact parallel with that of St. Paul—had taken place very early in life, and it was his wish that at his death a small pamphlet be written, giving an account of the circumstance, which might be useful to others. To Selah, with all a healthy boy's intense love of life, Samson's patience and resignation were a constant source of awe and wonder. He looked up to his brother with a solemn feeling of devotion, and listened to his exhortations, as he listened to the sermon on Sunday, with reverence, if not with much understanding.

But when Samson's thin cheeks began to grow rounder, and the stiff little legs became stronger; when he walked to school with Selah in the morning, and prepared lessons with him in the evening—then the unregenerate Selah began to look for human companionship in his brother, and finding still the moral preceptor only, he began to squirm and grow restive.

To the boys at Melbury Grammar School, Selah was something of a hero, for he could fling any one of them, and had thrashed a bully for ill-

treating a dog. He had taken a flogging, too, for unruly conduct, from the headmaster afterwards without divulging the bully's crime, and the boys had declared he was a stunner. He was captain of the cricket eleven, and a useful half-back at football. But in the eyes of his brother Samson he was but a weakling and a reprobate, and Samson prayed much for him at evening worship.

So Selah began to show off before his brother all his greatest feats of strength, to prove himself a man. He would send the cricket ball from one end of the long field to the other with a splendid swing of his arm, or would carry great weights, or box with the strongest man in the village. He would bluster and offer to knock fellows down; and he would leap hurdles, in a swagger way, with his hands in his pockets. And then he would catch sight of his brother's patient face and slender form, and he would drop the great weights or the boxing gloves with a burning blush of shame, and call himself a cad for showing off before a weak chap like Sammy. He would show his compunction in a dozen ways; would carry home Samson's books, and would have

carried Samson himself on his back if he had allowed it. He would spend his money in buying a book for his brother, and for days he would not box nor fight, but would go about feeling ashamed of his great strength.

But as the months went by, and Samson's health still continued to improve, his bright example became more and more irksome to the elder boy.

"It isn't fair to shame him at cricket or at games," he said with a sigh. "But if Sammy would only tell a lie or do something, it would make things so much pleasanter all round."

To attain the longed-for equality with his younger brother, Selah went so far as to suggest clumsily to Samson that he should use a crib in preparing his lessons, and say nothing about it.

Samson rose from his chair, and swept the tempter aside with a wave of his arm. "Get thee behind me, Satan," he said, and he left the room, leaving Selah biting his nails and kicking the legs of a chair.

That night Selah evaded evening prayer, and remained out in the fields till it was time to go to bed. At ten o'clock he slunk upstairs to the room which the brothers shared, and here he found

Samson on his knees saying his prayers. Selah respected the attitude, and began to undress quietly. Presently Samson began to pray aloud. His petitions were always so beautifully worded that he considered it a lost opportunity to whisper them. The very beauty of their phraseology might touch some wayward heart, notably Selah's. To-night, it appeared that his brother was the sole subject of his supplications, and Selah heard all his frailties being explained to his Creator with an attention to detail which showed some insight on Samson's part.

"Tell-tale!" muttered poor Selah; and he had half a mind to say more, but Samson began to cough, and Samson's cough was a plea for respect which could never be gainsaid.

"You'd better get into bed, Sammy," he said, "and I'll fetch you your lozenges."

The cough was rather more troublesome than usual all night, and Selah got but little sleep. He was up and down a dozen times to wait upon his brother, for he was a kind-hearted boy, and devoted to Samson, except when he preached at him. First of all, he had to fetch the lozenges—a gelatinous species of sweetmeat which Selah

always thought looked remarkably good; then the bronchial Samson wanted a "hanky;" after that he demanded a "cup of cold water," for Samson liked to be scriptural even in the minor things of life. It was a cold night, and Selah thought he had never felt more sleepy than he did as he stood by Samson's bed, yawning till the tears came to his eyes.

Towards morning Samson's cough became less frequent, and Selah was beginning to think about getting some sleep, when from the other bed he heard his brother's voice reciting hymns and portions of Scripture.

Selah bore it in silence for some time, for after a night of coughing Samson had regained something of his old position of awe in Selah's eyes.

Presently however, as the recitation continued, he expostulated with his brother, and Samson fell to singing a psalm. This was too much for Selah's patience. It was already half-past four o'clock, and he had chance only of a couple of hours' sleep before he would have to get up.

"Oh! hold that noise, Sammy," he called out, "and let a man get a bit of sleep."

Samson chanted the Doxology and a dolorous "Amen," and began another psalm.

Selah did not know any psalms by heart, but he thought he would pay Samson out by singing too. He raised his lusty voice in a nigger melody, which he sang to the end. The words mingled oddly with his brother's psalm, and completely drowned the feeble voice; but it was impossible to sleep while singing a duet, and the clock pointed to five o'clock.

"For peace' sake, stop, Sam!" he entreated.

As this had no effect, he put his head under the clothes and shouted out, "Pray away! I can't hear a word you are saying." (This was glaringly untrue, for Samson's husky treble was distinctly audible from beneath the blankets.)

"Lord," said Samson, "he is like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, and refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely."

"I'll charm you in a minute!" called out Selah. He got up, and once more made a journey to Samson's bedside.

"Sam Harrison," he said, "it's nearly half-past five, and I am going to get some sleep. If you don't stop that praying and singing, I'll give you the best leathering you ever got in your life."

This was persecution such as Samson loved, and he became more fervent in his singing.

Down came Selah's hand on his shoulder—not brutally, it is true, but he administered a smart thrashing before he had done. Then he flung himself from the room, put on his clothes in the passage, and went out into the fields till school-time.

Samson did not go to school that day nor the day following. His cough, which had begun to trouble him on the night of Selah's persecution, became seriously worse; he was moved downstairs to his mother's warmer room, and Selah never slept with his brother again. He was not even allowed to be much in the sick-room, for Mrs. Harrison jealously guarded her favourite boy, and grudged every word that he addressed to any one but herself. She was with him night and day, treasuring up all his beautiful sayings, and counting every day holy because it might be Sammy's last. It is to be feared that Samson did not spare his mother, either by concealing his sufferings or detracting from the pathos of the situation. He had so many touching requests to make, so many last words to say! Poor Mrs. Harrison's comely

features became haggard and blotched with grief. She hung over her boy as though the very strength of her love might hold him to earth.

She watched him ceaselessly, and Selah never saw his brother alone. During Samson's last days, when the house was hushed, and the mysteriousness of the sick-room seemed to penetrate to the most distant chamber, Selah spent his days—ay, and his nights too—outside Samson's door, longing with a boy's desperate, unspoken longing for just one word with his brother; just one look of forgiveness before Samson died.

But the opportunity never came.

It is true that, on the last night of Samson's life, he summoned the whole of the small household about his bed, and blessed and forgave them all. (It was the death-bed scene which Samson had often rehearsed to himself in his lifetime.) But there was no special word for Selah, no special look of forgiveness such as the poor lad's heart was bursting for. Doubtless Samson had forgotten the thrashing, or he believed Selah had forgotten it. In any case, the words were not spoken, and Samson died.

* * * * *

Some white daisies were planted on his grave,

as he had desired; and Mr. Green, the minister, wrote his short biography, to which he gave the title, "Samson; or, The Story of a Pious Life." Poor Samson, it was just such a biography as he himself would have liked to read of himself. And, indeed, it did not say too much for the boy. For, though he was one who spoke more often out of season than in season, he had borne a life of ill-health very patiently; and if he had seemed to parade his religion, it was perhaps because his daily life and daily thoughts were closer to God than are those of some of us.

Mrs. Harrison shed many, many tears over her son's biography, and gave a number of copies to her friends; and Jacob, who was a slow reader, went through it page by page, and said, when he had finished, that "Sammy was a wonderful lad, surely; but he hoped it didn't seem like praising one of their own to hand the book about."

"He was a shining light," said Mrs. Harrison, "and should be put on a candlestick."

"Ay, ay," said Jacob; "but he was our own son, and we mustn't seem to brag."

"Who knows how much good Sammy's 'Life'

may not do," retorted Mrs. Harrison; "though I'm sure, with Selah going on the way he does, it's many would say, 'Physician, heal thyself'—meaning Selah."

"Mebbe Selah will settle down presently," quoth Jacob. "He is a good lad at bottom, and he was always fond of Sam."

"Fond of Sam!" cried Mrs. Harrison; "then why did he never put so much as a flower on his body when he was laid out? Why did he never go near that sick-room after Sammy died? Is that being fond of his brother?"

"Boys is contrary," said Jacob, and wished he could have put it better.

"*Sammy* wasn't contrary," said Mrs. Harrison conclusively, and her tears began to flow afresh.

"Oh! it wasn't only his not going to see his poor brother in his coffin," she began again—"we might ha' kept that to ourselves. But never to go to the funeral! that's a slight to the dead I can't forgive. Even your own sister noticed it, Jacob; and I'm sure she isn't one to pay much respect to them that's gone."

Jacob fidgeted uneasily in his chair. He understood the reference, and guessed what was coming.

"I wish I had just told her—only I hadn't the heart or the spirit just then—I wish I had just told her what I saw her doing with my own eyes, before her poor husband had been dead twenty-four hours. Yes, Jacob, it was only the morning after poor George passed away that I saw her making a potato-pie with onions, though she knew her husband could never abide the smell of them, and never had one in the house the whole of his married life. Mrs. Christopher told me, sitting in the chair where you are now, that she saw poor George's corpse that night, and there was an expression on his face which said as plainly as possible, 'Rachel, you might ha' waited for your onions till I was out o' the house.' Mrs. Christopher was sitting on that very chair as she said it, and I was standing as it might be here."

Jacob cleared his throat uneasily. It was one of the few secrets of his life that he had partaken, at his sister's house, of the pie in question.

"Folk show their troubles differently," he said, for he was a large-minded man.

"*Troubles*, they may!" replied Mrs. Harrison; "but it doesn't look like being a trouble at all to Selah if he, as you may say, almost dances over a

new-made grave. There isn't a piece of mischief taken place since poor Sam died that Selah has not had a hand in it."

This was only too true, and Jacob was well aware that, although his wife spoke severely, she knew not one-half of Selah's misdemeanours. The boy was a strapping fellow of seventeen years of age now, and had left school and begun to help his father on the farm; but he was constantly idling, and had, moreover, joined a set of wild fellows who rode to hounds and spent their evenings at the Bull Inn.

At last it happened that some stacks of straw in a neighbouring farmstead were burnt down, and it was proved that Selah had been seen there in the afternoon in a condition far from sober, and smoking a pipe. Selah did not deny the charge when it was made against him, and the farmer claimed ten pounds compensation. Jacob paid the damages, and said,—

"I'll not tell your mother, Selah." He added, with an effort, as he and his son walked home together in the twilight, "You seem a bit altered since poor Sam died."

Selah had a bursting sensation in his throat

which prevented his replying in his usual voice, so he shouted instead,—

“I’m going to the devil. Hurrah!”

He left his father suddenly, and jumping the low hedge at the side of the road, he made across the fields.

That night Selah was missing at evening prayer.

“If he is not in by ten o’clock, I shall lock the door as usual,” said Mrs. Harrison; “and he can sleep where he likes.”

The duty of reading the evening portion of Scripture had devolved, since Samson’s death, upon Jacob. To-night he opened the window and read, in a raised voice, the old loving, comforting story of the prodigal son. “If Selah’s hangin’ about anywhere, he’ll understand,” said Jacob to himself.

After prayers, as the boy had not appeared, he took the door-key from the wall where it hung, and remarked, in a shamefaced way, that “he was going to take a walk round the place.” He wandered into the orchard, and out into the moon-lit fields, calling softly his boy’s name. He went into the stable and loft, and struck a match and peered into all the corners. But he never thought

of going to the churchyard, where Selah was lying stretched on the white daisies on Samson's grave, and sobbing as though his heart would break.

"Sammy, Sammy," he sobbed, "I never meant to hurt thee. I didn't know you was so frail, or I would not have touched thee. If only you would come back, Sam, I would never persecute you again. I never before touched a weaker chap than myself, and if I had known you was ailing, I would have let you go on singing, and never said a word. I can't think why God didn't let your prayers make me better; but I suppose I'm one of the unregenerate, and doomed to everlasting punishment. I'm going away. I'm too bad to live at home, and I just see you standing by me, so sad and sorrowful, whatever I do, that it's driving me to the devil. I do wish you'd come back, Sam—I do wish you'd come back and speak to me again, and say you forgive me. I know I'm a strong lad and strike heavy, and your shoulders was terrible thin; but I didn't mean to hurt thee, Sam."

He fell asleep on Samson's grave; for youth will sleep, be it never so unhappy. He slept until early morning on the dry, newly laid sods and

the white daisies, and then he crept home and slipped a note, which he had written on a half-sheet of paper, under the door.

When Jacob got the note he said, "It must ha' got spotted with rain," for it had many blotches on it. It ran thus:—

"DEAR FATHER,—I am the chief of sinners; I persecuted the Lord's anointed, and though he prayed that it might not be laid to my charge, I can't get hold of forgiveness. The devil has always been in me, same as angels was in Sam. So good-bye, and no more at present from your respectful son,
SELAH HARRISON."

CHAPTER II.

SELAH went into a far country. He went to London, as the homeless and broken-hearted will always do. It was not so many miles away, but to him it was always the far country ; where, also, he would very often have fain filled himself with the husks that the swine did eat, for no man gave unto him.

In after years, when he was a minister of the gospel, he used to allude to the two years he spent in London in a dark and mysterious manner, as of a period when, if he did not waste his substance (being indeed without any substance whatever) in riotous living, he was tied and bound in sin, and hard to the gates of hell.

No one who had known him during these two years would have seen any resemblance between the taciturn, sad, grim-featured boy whom they knew, and the dark-coloured portrait which Selah was wont to paint of himself. To those few who knew him, there was indeed nothing to compare

with the young fellow whom they considered a religious fanatic and the Exile from his father's home, whose life in the far country Selah always spoke of with solemn penitence, and as a warning to others.

Mrs. Harrison always liked those sermons of her son's which alluded to the dark and mysterious time in London. She respected him more for the mystery that hung over this part of his life than she did for his piety; for Mrs. Harrison never could believe that Selah had the grace of God.

Selah hired himself to a citizen of the far country. He obtained work, after he had tramped the streets of London for two months and was very near starvation, and became a plate-washer in a hotel. He washed plates all day long—greasy plates, gravy-stained plates, mustard-daubed plates, well-scraped plates, and untidy, wasteful plates.

The scullery in which he washed them was underground. By leaning forward over the sink and looking up through the bars of the window, he could see the feet and ankles of the people who walked on the pavement overhead. He began to recognize people by their boots.

There was a pair of yellow leather boots, with an uneven limp, that used to pass by every morning at eight o'clock. Selah always thought they must belong to some nice young fellow who had hurt his foot; but one day he met the yellow leather boots in a bus, and they belonged to a sour-visaged old Jew-fellow, who wore them with a Sunday coat. That mistake happened in Selah's early days at the hotel. Later, he learnt to distinguish unfailingly the old step from the young, and even, or so he imagined, the footstep of the happy from that of the unhappy, and the light tread of the innocent from the uncertain, shuffling step of the guilty.

But indeed, except in the early morning or during his tea and dinner hours, he had but little time for watching the unceasing stream of footsteps above his head.

His work began every morning at six o'clock, and until eight it consisted chiefly in washing the hasty coffee cups and unfinished plates of those who breakfasted early to catch a train. Later on, the plates betokened more substantial meals; and, later still, there were the remains of the dainty breakfasts of late risers to cleanse

and scour. Two young women with red arms dried the plates as Selah washed them. They were cheerfully disposed girls, with an endless supply of chaff, which they exchanged with each other for Selah's benefit. When one of them happened to be alone with him, she was afraid of the gloomy young man who never "answered back" nor made a bit of fun. But when the two dried the plates together, and clattered them down in pile on pile upon the big deal table in the scullery, their tongues became loosened, and they polished their wit upon the slow-tongued country lad.

"Ain't he a bright young man, now!" remarked Florence to Rose. "You'd never guess 'e came from the country, would yer?"

"And down't 'e dress a treat, neither!" continued the lively Rose. "Wouldn't any one mistake 'im for a parson, with 'is black clothes?"

"Such a real religious name as 'e's got, too. Reely, it reminds me o' the time I was a young gurl, and sang psalms at my mother's knee."

"Oh, I do love psalms!" cried Rose, casting up her eyes, while Florence giggled.

In some dim, undefined way, these two rough

girls had acquired an idea that Selah was "religious." Not that Selah had ever spoken a word upon the subject, being in these days far too much troubled about his own soul to care greatly for the souls of others. But it seems that the thoughts of a man's heart are often more plainly writ on his face than he is aware. And even an unregenerate may catch a gleam of light from the great light for which he searches.

"Selah is a word in a psalm," quoth Florence, the girl of education. "It comes at the end of the verses, and means 'stop here if you like.'"

"It doesn't," retorted Rose; "it means 'sing louder.'"

"Sing louder, then, Selah," said Florence, gracefully adopting her friend's translation of the Hebrew. "Let's 'ave the Owld 'Undreth."

The two girls began to sing the psalm together, embellishing it with some blasphemous phrases so common to their ears that they hardly struck them as being irreverent. Both girls were blessed with exuberant animal spirits for which they had but little outlet, and their coarse rendering of the fine old psalm gave them intense enjoyment.

At its conclusion, Selah said to them in his rugged country speech,—

“I ain’t fit to reprove ye. But you’ll not get any good by taking God’s name in vain.”

When in doubt as to what to say or do, a London wench giggles. To any one who desires to reason with them, this habit is much more baffling than swearing. Florence and Rose giggled for several minutes after Selah had spoken, stopping sometimes for a moment, and then bursting out again as though overcome with amusement, nudging each other, and remarking at intervals that, “it did seem saffunny.” Selah, meanwhile, returned to his work, standing over the sink in a cloud of steam, and swilling his plates in the scalding water. The situation was beginning to be a trifle strained, and the girls’ giggles were becoming convulsive, when a happy diversion was made by a large laced-boot being thrust through the railings overhead.

“That’s Jim,” cried Florence delightedly, and she leaned over the sink and pressed her face against the bars of the window. The foot waggled three times between the railings, and she turned her common face, full of pure delight, to the interior of the scullery.

"That means he'll take me to the Music 'all to-night," she cried. "Oh, I say, ain't he a bloke and a 'arf!"

She fetched a couple of dry dishcloths from the back of the chair by the fire, and returned to her plate-drying with renewed vigour. She took the plates, hot and dripping, from Selah's hand, and polished and rubbed them with the rough cloth, her strong red arms moving briskly up and down, and her tongue going all the while. The psalm-singing was forgotten, and Jim and Jim's merits were the sole subject of conversation. Rose sympathized, as her class will, with a love-affair, a sickness, or a baby, and with nothing else in the world. She had a few solemn warnings to give, for Rose had known disappointments, and held it as her opinion that "there wasn't a chap you could trust." But she approved of Jim, and the dramatic incident of the boot thrust through the area-railings appealed to the romantic side of the young lady's nature.

"I wish you was going too," said Florence, with a gush of kind feeling towards Rose.

"I don't never wish to go with any one what doesn't care to arsk me," replied Rose significantly.

“But some folks is too good even to give a lady-friend a treat now and then,” said Florence.

They continued in this strain for a long time before it dawned upon Selah that their remarks were intended to convey a hint that the forsaken young lady would be glad to go to the theatre under his protection.

It would be almost impossible to exaggerate the loneliness of Selah Harrison's life at this time, and its never-lifting gloom. The knowledge of London and London life which he had gained during his two months' wanderings about its streets was altogether of its sordid, its hungry, its criminal side. Want makes strange bedfellows, and the companions with whom Selah had been thrown were most of them blackguards, and many of them thieves as well. It is hardly any wonder that, both at this present time, and looking back upon it in after years, London was to him a city of lost souls. Day by day he saw and, in his present state, could see only the evil that lay, as it seemed to him, beneath everything in London. The grimy smoke that hung over it was a fitting pall for the sin-steeped town. At night, in crowded courts, he had heard the fear-stricken

cries of a woman as a drunken brute threatened her life. He had seen little children ill-used and hungry, and young men grown desperate through illness and lack of food. A starving man knows little of the kindly side of life, and far less of its humour. The sinfulness of his surroundings was all that Selah saw, and, being a simple country lad, he called it by no other name than sin. Why did God allow it to be so? Why did not Christ come again to help the weak, and denounce the insolent and mighty, since men had so utterly forgotten all that He had taught them when He was on earth? Why did children still suffer, and women still cry out with fear, if God was love and this a Christian land? If he (Selah) were in God's place, his very humanity would not suffer one more day of suffering London. He would root out all the evil and pain, and establish the good. For good, even as he knew it, was better than God's plan for London. And yet he had heard that God's love was greater than human love, and His goodness was higher than a man's goodness. The daily contradiction of all that he saw and knew, with all that he had been taught, drove him to thoughts which he recognized as

blasphemies, but whose grip of him he was powerless to prevent. Christ had tried to save the world, and had failed. Redemption was for the few who, like Samson, were born good, and who had been destined from the beginning of the world for life eternal.

It didn't seem fair, but it was a fact.

The thought of his own lost soul tormented him. Were he saved, he might speak to people, and remind them of what Christ had taught; but how should a sinner like himself dare to reprove or exhort? Selah honestly believed at this time that he was one of those who are predestined to everlasting punishment. Such a sentiment may appear in a ridiculous light to the Christian of to-day. And indeed it most often seems that if the doctrine of predestination is held at all nowadays, it is held only by those who are assured of their own personal safety. Merciful it is that this is so. For even if it be ridiculous, it is nevertheless pitiable that a man should wake day after day, and go to sleep night after night, with the conviction that he is not only unsaved but unsaveable.

But the scullery-maid is waiting to know

if the plate-washer will take her to the theatre.

When Selah realized that she was hinting for him to do this, he looked at her oddly for a moment, and then said, "I'll take you if you wish it."

A sudden revolt at his life came over him. He was young; and he had read and prayed in his room every evening without ever a gleam of light in his soul. He felt a sudden horror of the little room whose smoke-blackened ceiling was connected in his mind with all his agonized prayers. He could not return to it this evening! He had no thought of sinning, for the reason that he was a doomed man, and might surely enjoy something before his everlasting penalty would have to be paid. No, it was the horror of the loneliness of the little room, and the hopelessness of his nightly prayers there, from which he shrank. It is true that he considered honestly that the theatre was one of the gates of hell. He had always heard it so called at home, and the most dissolute men and girls whom he knew in London were those who frequented the theatres and music halls.

"I will take you if you wish it," he said, and

his young heart gave a sudden leap as he thought that, for this one evening, he would not sit in his little room reading the comfortless Bible and praying to the unanswering God.

Rose piloted him safely to the gallery of an East End theatre, feeling half ashamed of Selah's ignorance in not knowing his way about, and half delighted at showing off her own superior knowledge. She fought her way to the front row of the gallery, and having seated herself, she asked Selah if he had brought any nuts with him, and Selah said "No." She gave him a contemptuous glance, and produced a large packet of cobs from her pocket, and offered him a generous handful. Her civility this evening was new to Selah, but it was pleasant nevertheless. He accepted the nuts, and they began to crack them with their teeth and to eat them. When the play began, Rose, like her neighbours, continued to crack and eat nuts, but Selah sat absorbed and breathless from beginning to end.

The play was of a highly dramatic order, and its tendency was all for good. The hero, in loud-checked clothes, triumphed gloriously over the villain in seedy black; the righteous maidservant,

in the tight cotton dress, married her soldier-lover, and the incorruptible stable-boy was raised at a tender age to be stud-groom in the service of the be-checked hero.

It was the happiest evening Selah had spent in London—an evening of pure bliss and unmitigated enjoyment. He listened, trembling, when the villain revealed his dark plots to an accomplice in the presence of the incorruptible stable-boy—a character who, by the way, was persistently invisible to the villain and his accomplice, even when he advanced up-stage and addressed asides to the audience. His heart stood still when the hero entered the burning house to save the beautiful heroine, and he paled to the lips when, for one brief moment, it seemed that the red lime-light from the wings would consume her before her lover had reached her.

He forgot Rose (who despised him for his emotion); he forgot the steamy scullery and the girls' rough chaff. Ay, for this one evening only, he forgot Samson, and he never thought at all about his own lost soul.

When the play was over he felt dazed, and he looked at the stream of people leaving the theatre

as though they were strange beings and he himself had but just come to a strange, new world. He did not hear Rose's conversation as they rode home in the bus together; he saw nothing but the hero, and himself as that hero, rescuing the beautiful girl from the burning house.

When he got home and knelt to pray, he could remember nothing but the brave words of the play he had just seen; he got into bed and dreamt happy dreams till morning.

As he walked to the hotel the next day, still treading on air, he saw a cab being loaded with luggage in front of a large and stately house. A gentleman in a travelling-ulster came down the steps, and Selah instinctively raised his finger to his cap as he recognized "Mr. Philip" Napier.

The young fellow stopped a moment as he was getting into the cab, and gave Selah a kindly nod.

"I didn't know you were in London, Harrison," he said. "Have you got a berth here?"

"Yes, sir," replied Selah, taken by surprise, and hoping devoutly that Mr. Philip would not question him as to his whereabouts.

"Melbury is a better place!" replied Philip, with a smile. "I know I'm glad to be going back

there." He was stepping into the cab again, when he recollected something and stopped.

"I was very sorry to hear of your father's death," he said. "We shall all miss him at Melbury; and it is a sad thing for your mother."

Selah was looking stupidly at him, and the young man glanced at his watch and drove away.

The thought of Jacob had been the one comforting thought of Selah's life since he left home.

He could never forget the quiet face and kindly voice of his father. It had always been before his mind that some day, even if he were never converted, he would walk up in the evening to the old red-roofed house, and listen by the window and hear Jacob reading the story of the prodigal son. He would wait, he thought, till the reading was over, and his mother had gone to bed. And then he would enter, and Jacob would say, "Here's my hand, lad." He could never imagine his father saying less or more than these direct and simple words (Jacob's speech was not flowery), but he knew he would get his welcome whenever he returned. He remembered how once, when he was a little chap and had played truant from school, he had been afraid to return home till it

was late and dark, and he was too hungry to remain away any longer. And how, when at last he stole in and laid his tired head on Jacob's shoulder and cried bitterly (for he was but a little chap), his father's lip had quivered, and he had said to him, "Even if you've done murder, Selah, come back to me, and I'll take you in."

And Jacob was dead! Why, he had never had an hour's illness; he had never been a day indoors. He *couldn't* be dead! When had he died? Weeks ago, when Selah was sleeping under railway arches, and suffering daily pangs of hunger? Or was his death more recent? Had it happened only a day or two ago? Only yesterday, perhaps, and while his son was forgetting God and his soul in a theatre, his father had been lying still and cold in the darkened room where Samson had lain. It was a judgment of God; for, with the simple-hearted egotism of an introspective nature, he believed it possible that the life of his father might be sacrificed to teach him a lesson. It was a judgment, and a well-deserved one. How hideous the contrast appeared between his evening of dissipation with gaily-dressed Rose at the theatre and the quiet death-bed of his father!

He shuddered with a sudden self-loathing and horror at the thought, and clenched his hands in bitterest grief and despair.

Then the impulse to see his father's face once more, even in death, overcame him, and he ran in hot haste to the station and took train to the Northern town, whence he would have to walk to Melbury.

He was afraid to walk through the village in daylight, so he waited till it was dusk, and then went across the fields to his old home. It was a chilly, bleak day in early spring, and a bright fire was burning in the front room, throwing a cheerful patch of light on the flagged pathway. The curtains were not drawn, and Selah crept up to the window and looked in. Some children were playing before the fire, and a rosy-cheeked wife was sitting at tea with her husband. The room and the furniture were as Selah remembered them, but Jacob's big armchair had been covered with bright chintz, and wheeled from its old place by the fire into the window. "They might have left his chair where he liked it," said Selah, and the hot tears blinded him as he looked through the window.

He crept away from the house as noiselessly as he had come, passing through the garden and orchard, and wandering about the old spots that he remembered so well. Here everything was unaltered. The garden-beds were new-dug for the spring planting, the whitened trunks of the apple trees gleamed white and ghostly in the twilight, as they used to do, and the birds had begun to build in their old summer quarters again.

A verse from his well-read Bible came to his mind—a verse which said that, “the things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal.”

“Lord, it isn’t so! it isn’t so!” cried Selah, standing by the old yew arbour where he and his father used to sit in summer-time. “Everything that I see is just the same as it used to be; they haven’t altered a thing but father’s chair. But all the rest is changed.”

For love, which is a thing unseen, was gone from the place, and the bright confidence that a boy feels only in his own home was everlastingly lost. The joy that a child knows, the pleasure of a light-hearted nature, the hopefulness of youth, all were gone. And only the things

which are seen and temporal, only the flower-beds and the apple trees and the yew arbour remained unchanged.

He went to the churchyard, and stooping down, he lit a match and read a newly-cut name on Samson's headstone,—

JACOB HARRISON,

BORN JUNE 14TH, 1812,

DIED FEB. 18TH, 1864.

CHAPTER III.

LATER in the evening he went back to the old house again, for all his heart was there. He wanted, too, to find out where his mother was, and he preferred asking her whereabouts from the strangers who had come to the farm rather than from any one whom he used to know.

He rapped at the door, and the thought struck him that it was the first time in his life that he had done so. The small formality made him feel a stranger indeed. When he entered, he hung his hat on its familiar peg in the porch, and missing his father's coat from its accustomed place, he had almost said to himself, "Father can't have come home yet."

Mrs. Murrel, the rosy-cheeked farmer's wife, received him kindly, and bade him be seated in the pleasant, wide front-room. From instinct, Selah pulled forward and sat down on his own chair, instead of on the one that had been offered him.

He could not speak for some time. All the tears that he wanted to shed seemed to have gathered in his throat, and he tried, without any success, to swallow them down with a gulp. The familiar sounds of the house, that are everywhere more perceptible in the twilight than at any other time, were filling his heart to bursting. The distant shutting of his own bedroom door seemed to give him back again a moment of childhood; and out in the yard, the regular lifting of the pump-handle, and the gushing noise of the water as it flowed into the wooden tub, were like the lilt of some old song which he had once heard and had forgotten.

He fixed his eyes on some toys that the farmer's children had left on the floor when they had been summoned to bed; and, without realizing it, he felt offended that there should be this litter, such as his mother would not have allowed.

"You'll be a stranger in these parts, I suppose?" said the farmer, conversationally.

"No," said Selah, and found he could not say more.

"It's a pretty place, Melbury is," the farmer went on; "but feels cold after the Sheers."

"To which Selah replied, with a gush of words,—

"I wish ye would tell me what Jacob Harrison died of."

"Dear, dear, now," broke in the rosy-cheeked wife; "to think you knew the old place in the Harrisons' time. Well, for sure!"

"Was he long ill?" asked Selah, anxious to ask questions when the lump in his throat permitted him.

"Just one week," replied the good wife. "And a stronger-looking man they do say you would never see."

(Selah calculated rapidly to find what he had been doing during that week, and it gave him a little comfort to remember that he had been almost starving.)

"He was took ill, as it might be, the Sunday, and before next Sunday he was a corpse."

It was evident from her glibness that Mrs. Murrel had often recounted the history of Jacob's last illness. She continued to give details of it, and did not notice Selah's silence.

"It mun 'a been a sore trial for his poor wife," the farmer broke in when Mrs. Murrel had stopped for breath; "and folk say she has become terrible

austere since it happened. "It's 'ard on any one losing a son and husband so near together; and if a woman doesn't break down under trouble, she seems to stand up to it till it makes her stiff and hard."

"It was her favourite son she lost, we understand," appended the wife, "though it seems the father favoured the wild one, who has gone no one knows where. Mr. Harrison made sure he would come back before he died; but Mrs. Christopher, who helped in the nursing, says he was never a man to think his own wishes of much count, and that seems to help a man to live content, and die content too, I'm sure."

Selah tried to say, "He did not fret much for me then?" but the words refused to pass the barrier in his throat.

"You'll remember Mrs. Christopher perhaps, if you used to know Melbury?"

Selah nodded.

"Ah, she was a good friend to the Harrisons, I believe. She was with Mrs. Harrison all through the illness, and never had off her stays the last two nights."

"Where is she?" asked Selah, meaning his mother.

"Still at the shop," replied Mrs. Murrel, referring to Mrs. Christopher, "though talking of giving up business."

She had talked of it ever since Selah could remember.

"She was speaking about poor Mrs. Harrison only last night when I was doing a little ordering. Mrs. Harrison, you see, has gone to live with her sister in York, and Mrs. Christopher says she is still as unbending as she can be. She'll cry for Samson (that's the boy who died), but she can't cry for her husband; and she won't mention the wild son who brought disgrace on them all."

The choking sensation left Selah's throat. He rose and said "Good night."

"Don't be in a hurry," said Mrs. Murrel hospitably. It's not late. That old clock gains a little, I think."

"Yes," said Selah, "she always gained a little. You should put a wad of paper under her front legs."

And he went out and travelled back to London again.

His place at the hotel had been filled, of course. He did not even think of asking to be taken on

again. He stooped down on the pavement opposite the scullery window, and, looking through the rails, he saw a red-faced boy chasing Rose round the room and kissing her in a corner. He thought what a happy thing it was for them all that he had left.

He called at his humble lodging, and found himself longing to stay there, for the place had at least some memories for him. And it is memories that help to make home. But when he had paid what he owed his landlady, he found he had exactly two shillings and eightpence left in his pocket.

A policemen picked him up a few nights later, when he had fainted on a doorstep, and took him to a hospital. He could hardly have broken down from hunger, for he still had some coppers in his pocket. But the scullery-sink at the hotel had not been trapped, and the hot steam in which Selah had been wont to stand all day had been poisonous as a fetid marsh. He lay ill with typhoid fever for many weeks, and when he bent his tottering steps from the door of the hospital the soft air of summer was blowing in his face, and all the trees in the Park were green.

It seemed to him now a wonderful world to

which he had come back. The sky looked as blue as it used to look long, long ago, when he was a boy. Men and women with strong firm steps went hurrying past him. How quickly they walked, and with what vigour! The horses appeared no less than mighty, and a top-heavy omnibus, crowded to the roof, thrilled him with a sense of living. He was penniless, homeless, weak. But a certain peace which comes with weakness, and exists, perhaps, just because we are too feeble to trouble, filled his heart. He wandered into the Park. He sat down under the trees and watched the gaily-dressed folk walking up and down. They looked happy. He knew nothing of the sorrows of the rich. He felt glad there was happiness in the world.

The birds chirped in the branches overhead, and the sun shone on the satin coats of the horses in the Row. The air felt pure and fresh, as it does on a June day even in London. The world seemed a better ordered place here in the clean West End of London than it had ever seemed in the far and filthy East; and he was too young and of too humble a nature to know envy or to rail at the inequality of men's lots.

He stretched his weak limbs, grown terribly long and thin during his illness, and looked up at the blue sky between the branches of the trees, and thought that even if, up there in heaven, there was a wrathful because an awfully just God, there also was his own kind earthly father, who had always loved him and would never believe evil of him, and had died with a kind word for him on his lips. He knew Jacob had felt sorry for him in his illness and loneliness, though he had heard that there was no such thing as sorrow in heaven. There must be a certain sort of sorrow if those who knew us and loved us while they lived with us know us and love us still. And, oh! while the world is emptying so quickly of those few who love us well, surely, for very pity's sake, we may be allowed to think that in heaven they love us still.

With the sense of a great compassion felt somewhere for him, and the strange, pathetic joy that is experienced even by the sad and homeless when they come back from the gates of death, Selah rose and walked with uneven, feeble steps out of the Park, and made his way to the East of London again. He clambered to the top of a bus,

for his tottering limbs would not carry him far. He felt the sun on his back, and the warm air in his face; and the swinging motion of the bus seemed to him wonderfully easy and pleasant.

Piccadilly, with its sunny pavements, was passed, and the surging noise of the City was in his ears—the pushing, hurrying, eager life of the mercantile world roared about him. And so on to the broad Whitechapel Road, and then to the crowded alleys of Stepney.

Ah, the ugliness of it! Ah, the poor stunted children, and the shambling, ill-made men! And the poor women—the poor, loud-voiced, foul-tongued, but very helpless women—the hopeless bondage of some of their lives—the painfulness of existence—the hideous cruelty of it! Surely, surely some one pitied them and was sorry for them, as his kind old father was sorry for him.

Some divine sort of sorrow there must be in heaven. And perhaps God was sorry for His children.

* * * * *

To the day of his death, Selah Harrison never felt that personal assurance of his own spiritual safety which is held so necessary by some devout

souls. And indeed it must be a happy possession. But it may be that, as there are twelve gates to the heavenly city, so there are many ways by which God leads men thither. So that the love which a woman bears him may lead one man up to the pearly portals ; and the wee cold hand of a dead child may gently guide another ; and just to realize God's pity may bring a man, though he scarce knows it, not far from the shining gates. And the city itself is love.

Selah went back to his little room in Romford Street. He had left a few possessions there, and in his weakness he longed for familiar things. His landlady informed him frankly that she had sold everything he had left behind to defray expenses. He had paid his rent up to the day of his leaving the house, and he wondered what expenses could be connected with the storage of the few articles of clothing he had left in the cupboard and the one or two unframed prints with which he had adorned the walls. But the landlady spoke with authority, and gave, moreover, such a legal turn to the conversation by the frequent use of the term "defraying expenses," that he did not question her rights. He was glad that

the little room was still tenantless, for he was very tired, and his only wish was that the voluble landlady would stop talking (an inconceivable contingency), and that he could lay his head down somewhere. She said he looked ill, and offered him a glass of gin, with the generosity characteristic of those whose frailty it is to over-indulge themselves in its use.

Selah said, "No, thank you," he would rather rest; and the landlady replied that he needn't be so proud then, and went out, slamming the door.

He lay in a stupor of fatigue till evening, and then he went out and bought himself some tea with fourpence of his small store of money. He slept badly, and it was early light. The silence of night lasts for three hours in East London, and almost with the dawn comes the noise of busy life again.

Selah lay still. He watched the day break, and heard the first sounds of life around him—the rumble of carts in Commercial Road, and in Romford Street the smart raps on window or door of the call-man, who acts the part of housemaid in East London, and wakes weary sleepers to begin their daily work again. He saw the sunlight

steal through his uncurtained window and light up the shabby, familiar room. The almost patternless paper on the wall, and the dirt-stained floor were just as he had left them. The hideous surroundings of the poor do not alter frequently. He looked at the smoke-blackened ceiling to which he had so often raised his eyes in hopeless, irresponsible beseechings, and he thought of the night he had forgotten God and gone to the theatre with Rose. That it was a perfectly harmless little outing did not even suggest itself to him. To him it had meant turning his back on God and prayer, and deciding for the devil. He had sinned, and he had been terribly punished. He poured out his soul in penitence for this and for his other offences—his distrust, his blasphemous questionings, his doubts. And the great, pitying God, whom only yesterday he had found, gave him in the midst of his self-loathing and distress, the blessed comfort of high resolve—reparation; the intention to do better; the “other chance,” which we all so passionately desire. Surely, if this be given, penitence is not wholly bitter. For the sting of penitence is despair.

To Selah, his repentance meant no little thing.

He made no petty resolves, nor vowed that he would give up this thing or that. But, dimly at first, there was revealed to him the unassailable grandeur of a life of self-renouncement. He did not foresee happiness in it—the righteousness which makes for happiness had not been revealed to him—his religion taught him nothing of joy, but only of sacrifice. But, with the fine, simple courage of a man of faith, he faced his life, convinced of its deepest meanings, and steadfast in his purpose to dare and to endure. And firmly and steadily, with pitiless distinctness, he then and there drew the line between God and Mammon, and made his choice between them. That the choice would perchance have still to be made daily he never doubted, and God spared him all knowledge of that day when he should make it in despite of fierce longings and with a breaking heart.

Always, to the very end, life was a stern warfare to Selah Harrison. It admitted of no half measures; it was uncompromising; it was in a way terrible. But it must be fought out. And the armour in which he fought was clumsy and old-fashioned, maybe. It permitted of none of the

nimbleness which our modern accoutrements allow. It was cumbersome and heavy, but it was solid; and Selah wore it with patient sternness to the day of his death.

His religion was full of faults, no doubt; whose is not? He aimed exclusively at the methods of Christianity; its results were only to be experienced in the next world. Had peace and joy come to him, it is doubtful whether he would not have felt suspicious of the circumstance. Peace and joy were the attributes of heaven. Striving and wrestling were a man's portion here. Woe to that soldier who slept while the battle raged, or dared to foretaste his reward before victory was won! But, with all its faults, this man's religion had one merit, if it had no other; and that was its reality. It dominated his whole life, urging, compelling, upholding him. It was the vital part of his existence. Undeviating, perhaps narrow (the broad-mindedness which sees no harm in anything was a creed of which he had not heard), it yet contained this obstinate, unquenchable spark of life—its passionate reality.

* * * * *

It was some time before he entered the ministry,

but he was always ready, waiting in eager patience for a call from God—a guiding that would show him where his work lay.

Meanwhile, he lived in London with his mother, to whom he had been reconciled, and taught little boys while studying hard himself.

His mother kept house for him in Battersea. It was a comfortable little home, for Mrs. Harrison had been left well provided for. But the happiest days of her life were over. She was one of those women to whom the unaccustomed is always painful. Innovations were hateful to her, and she was suspicious of unfamiliar things. The change in Selah was a disturbing element to which she never grew accustomed. She would have welcomed more heartily her sinning, unruly boy, than this grave-faced tall man, with his patient humility, and his kind, considerate ways. Samson was her good son, and Selah was the wild one. It upset her familiar views of things, and filled her with something that was almost like irritation to discover that he no longer required her mild bullying. She told herself that it was her joy to see this change in the prodigal, and she was unconscious of any insincerity when she thanked God for his

conversion. But, as a man's valet is believed incapable of recognizing the heroic in his master, so, perhaps, a mother may find it hard to identify her but yesterday chastised and scolded boy with the deep thinker or serious-minded man of to-day. And Mrs. Harrison never quite accommodated herself to the fact that Selah had found grace.

She helped him with his night class of boys; but to the country woman, whose piety had ever of necessity known less irregular outlets, Selah's form of goodness seemed to her at all times a little overstrained. Sammy had been converted, but he had never invited dirty boys to come messing into her clean kitchen. He had read the Bible quietly at home, and said beautiful words. His was a righteousness which seemed to her both orderly and reasonable. She allowed Selah's scholars to take possession of her kitchen, and she even assisted them in their work. But she had a protesting way of flinging open the window when they had left, which was a distinct relief to her feelings.

She much desired that Selah should become a minister of the gospel. To her practical mind the recognized channels of goodness were the only

commendable ones. Besides, you did get something for your trouble as a minister (and in her heart of hearts Mrs. Harrison longed to be re-established in that social status which she had lost by leaving Melbury), but a teacher of dirty boys was an uncatalogued species for whom she could find no name in her own mind. She respected Selah, but she wanted others to respect him also; and she never lost an opportunity of urging him to adopt the sacred profession.

How could Selah tell her that he was waiting hungrily for a call from God?—doubting his own worthiness because he received no sign. At last the call came.

He had been addressing a Sunday class of young men, and as he walked home one of them overtook and asked permission to accompany him as far as his home. On the way thither the young fellow—a delicate, consumptive lad, with a hollow chest and a nervous, weak mouth—told him of some of the religious difficulties that had been possessing him, and how he had found peace and happiness through Selah's words. It was a joyful surprise to the young teacher (whose shyness during the time he had been speaking had seemed to him to

render his voice almost inaudible) to hear that he had been the means of bringing salvation to one poor soul. The nervous, excitable boy, who had been moved by his words, as he had been moved a dozen times before by every sort of religionist, from Anglican priests to Salvation Army captains, had no idea of the importance of his words to Selah. He walked home beside him, his short breath almost failing him sometimes as he reasoned of his doubts, his beliefs, his assurance or his want of assurance.

A less patient listener would soon have wearied of his egotism, and a man of more experience would have been made sceptical by the convert's glibness, and his frequent use of conventional religious terms. But Selah was thanking God that he had been able to help some one.

"And oh, Mr. Harrison," said the boy, in his frothy, pretentious way, "to think of the thousands and millions of beings who can never know the peace and safety that I now experience! Those heathen, now, in foreign lands—how many there are whom the gospel message never reaches!"

"There must be many such," said Selah.

"Many!" exclaimed the boy, full of importance

at giving information ; “ why, at a missionary meeting I was at the other night, I heard of an island in the South Seas that has never had a religious teacher upon it. They are sunk in sin, Mr. Harrison—such tales we was told about them ! but no one can be found to venture near the poor benighted creatures.”

“ What is the name of the island ? ” asked Selah.

“ Well, now, I forget,” said the young fellow. “ But it was the Rev. James Milward told us about it at the meeting, Cannibalism, Mr. Harrison, and all sorts of cruelty goes on ; and it’s too dangerous for any missionary to go there. The society—I’m so interested in societies, Mr. Harrison—have applied for some one to be brave enough to go, but no one can’t be found to volunteer.”

A chance meeting with Mr. Milward, who gave every particular of the dark deeds done on the island of Taro, and the impossibility of finding a missionary to go there, confirmed Selah in his conviction that his call had come.

He rose up to obey it with his heart on fire ! The martyr spirit, which feels that life itself is not enough to offer, nor eternity long enough for worship, was strong within him. That night, as he

knelt by his bed, his spirit was exalted to passionate fervour. Tears were filling his eyes as he raised them heavenward, and he seemed to look straight into the face of God as he yielded himself wholly, humbly—body, soul, and spirit, keeping back nothing—a reasonable sacrifice offered with joy that was glorious, uplifting, not of earth. A strange smile lit up his face—a smile humble and proud and loving—breaking over the sad, stern countenance like a gleam of bright sunshine. He started to his feet, and raised his arms heavenward, and said, with the glad tears in his eyes,—

“Lord, here am I; send me.”

CHAPTER IV.

HIS mother was disappointed, of course. Her ingenuous longings to be re-established in the social status were now hopeless—she would never be the minister's mother in a quiet village, and have friends to tea. It was very disappointing. But even while she grieved, Mrs. Harrison paid her son's college fees at Glasgow University, and stitched many white shirts for him (with stiff fronts), in anticipation of his sojourn amongst a people who, for obvious reasons, had no knowledge of clear-starching.

Her heart was heavy; and when Selah, having finished his course of study, came home in May, and actually began to make preparations for leaving in November, she used all her powers to persuade him not to go. She knew all the time that she was only making her son wretched, while in no way moving him from his determination; but, woman-like, she could not resist arguing against the inevitable, and her one comfort, after Selah

had departed, was that she had done all in her power to dissuade him from going.

During the months he spent in London he resumed his old work amongst the poor; and this proceeding formed the basis of Mrs. Harrison's most powerful and oftenest-wielded argument—"Were there no white heathen at home to whom he could preach, without going tearing off to a lot of savages in Taro?"

Perhaps the only thing that finally in any way reconciled her to his becoming a missionary was hearing him speak at a meeting in Tottenham.

Selah had attracted some attention by his work amongst the rough lads and lassies in East London, and also from the fact that he was so soon going on a dangerous missionary enterprise. In consideration of this, he was asked to address a Sunday afternoon meeting at Tottenham. How extravagantly he longed not to comply with this request only the very shy will understand; but funds were wanted for the mission, and he hoped by his preaching to excite some interest in the object.

The church was crowded to the door on the afternoon that he was invited to deliver his address. It was a painfully vulgar-looking building, and its

interior smelt offensively of newly-varnished pitch-pine and humanity. (Alas, humanity does smell in Tottenham!) It was built in an oblong form, with a pitch-pine gallery and pitch-pine pews; in the place of an altar there was a pitch-pine pulpit, built to accommodate eight to a dozen men. Immediately below was an enclosed space for singers. Selah went up into the pulpit with his grave and steadfast air; but his heart beat painfully, and it is doubtful whether he would not rather have met the lions of the early Christian arena than this comfortable, stolid-faced congregation in Giles Street Church, Tottenham.

He sat down in the least conspicuous place he could find, and covered his face to pray.

"Lord," he said, "glorify Thy name—glorify Thy name. In Thy hand all instruments are alike. Use me for Thy glory, and give me courage to deliver the message with which Thou hast charged me."

A converted tight-rope dancer was to speak before Selah's turn came. He sat next him in the wide, red-lined pulpit, and sucked a lozenge during the singing of the hymn and the prayer. He rose jauntily to his feet when the time came for him

to speak, and thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets, he walked forward to the front of the pulpit, withdrew one of his hands, and passed it through his luxuriant curly hair, and smiled with calm self-assurance. His address abounded with personal experience; it savoured of the circus-ring and footlights, and was full of humorous allusions and jokes. The audience was delighted. They laughed uproariously at the jokes, and beat applause on the resounding wooden floor of the church when the dancer gave a vivid description of his evil life and his subsequent conversion. When he had finished they cheered him loudly. And then Selah came forward, grave of face, and with his steadfast eyes fixed on something farther off than the congregation of Giles Street Church, Tottenham. He began his address in low, earnest tones, which utterly failed to lay hold of his hearers' attention, and he continued, feeling with desperate conviction that no one was listening to him, till the fidgeting movements of the congregation caused him to finish abruptly, before he had said more than half of what he had prepared. He sat down with his head burning and his feet as cold as ice.

A self-satisfied young evangelist blessed the

congregation in a patronizing manner, and Selah was at liberty to step down from the horribly conspicuous pulpit and go home.

His mother was waiting for him at the door, and an effusive deacon was shaking hands with every one as they came out, and saying he was glad they had been able to come.

Mrs. Harrison linked her arm in that of her son, and they tramped homeward in silence through the muddy streets.

The woman was the first to speak.

"Ye were always bashful, Selah," Mrs. Harrison said kindly.

"I was a coward," said Selah, with the uncompromising sternness he used only towards himself.

They walked home, for, like many quaint, old-fashioned people of those days, they believed that the fourth commandment applied to omnibus-horses as well as to the more Scriptural donkey. The streets were filled with respectable folk, enjoying Sunday in their respectable, burgess fashion. Numbers of young married people passed them, with their little families in perambulators or toddling by their sides. Happy, contented-looking work-people, most of them: the wives were cer-

tainly pale and overburdened-looking; but the men wore a prosperous, well-satisfied air. These complacent faces, and warm overcoats, and smart bonnets were just such as Selah had seen mistily, as in a cloud, when he stood in the big, conspicuous pulpit.

"Ah," he cried out sharply, "I have no message for them. They like the cheerful religion of the dancer—it's just that sort of lightness and fun that they want in their dull, respectable lives; they would never listen to me! It is to the people who have never heard of Him to whom I am called."

His failure to move, or even to interest, the congregation at Tottenham caused him to throw himself with redoubled fervour into his work amongst the very poor of East London. He never spared himself. By day and by night, too, he was at the call of any one who required his services. Time was so short, and there were so many unconverted souls waiting to be saved!

When midsummer came, and the days were hot and airless, Mrs. Harrison went to stay with her sister in York. It was a relief to her to leave London, where she had not made any friends;

and it is doubtful whether it was not a relief to Selah to find himself unfettered by the claims of time and duty which he owed his mother. The frequent interruptions to the very short hours that he could spare to his home were a constant grievance to Mrs. Harrison. And Selah had the unpleasant conviction that he was constantly causing her inconvenience. In fact, these two good people mutually sacrificed themselves, as is often the case.

At the end of August London emptied itself of even its poorest inhabitants; for hop-picking had begun, and Selah went with the rowdy denizens of Stepney and Poplar into the dear, beautiful county of Kent.

It was a starlight morning when he started. The "hoppers' train" leaves London Bridge Station at 1 a.m. The platform was crowded with roughs of all ages and descriptions—loud-voiced, larky girls; brutal-looking men, in their livery of fustian and dirt; women with evil faces, and many children—all pushing, all carrying bundles.

Early though the hour was, the hoppers' fund of good spirits and flow of talk was as abundant as it always is. Sudden blows, hasty quarrels,

and hideous language there undoubtedly were; but I believe that the prevailing characteristic of a London crowd is its good humour—and the crowd on the platform of London Bridge Station was no exception to the rule. Huddled together in stuffy railway carriages, burdened with children and bundles, they seemed oblivious to discomfort and want of air, and when not sleeping peacefully in the midst of the noise and the shoving, they made endless jokes, and indulged in good-humoured, broad chaff.

Selah Harrison was dressed in plain dark clothes, and was unknown to most of the hop-pickers even by sight. The inhabitants of Vauxhall, Mile End, Seven Dials, and the more northern slums of London were pouring into Kent and Sussex, and but few of his own following of men and girls travelled by this morning's train. He was made the victim of rough chaff like the rest, and had to push his way into one of the less crowded carriages, where he was lucky enough to get a seat.

The train had hardly started before he fell asleep, and he had hardly fallen asleep before he had his pocket picked of all that was in it. The clumsy fumbling of the amateur thief awoke him,

and he knew by the sudden movement of the man next him who the thief was. The thief himself knew that he was detected, and a very ugly look came into his face. He was a rough-looking savage, and as strong as a bull. Selah met his eyes, and looked him straight in the face, then turned in his seat, and went to sleep again. When the train reached Staplehurst a large number of the passengers, including Selah and the ugly-visaged gentleman who had deprived him of the contents of his pocket, alighted. The man had a child with him—a weakly, ailing little specimen, who shivered and cried when she came from the warm stuffiness of the railway carriage into the crisp, frosty, early-morning air of the country.

“Poor little lass!” said Selah. “Better put this coat round her. I shall be at the Springett’s farm up at High Temple,” he added, turning to the man, “so you’ll know where to return it.”

Now, the odd part of it was that the man did return the coat that very night, and in one of the pockets he had replaced about one-half of the money of which he had relieved Selah.

Selah heard the coins jingling, and taking them from the pocket, he counted them out carefully

before the man. Having done so, he put them back in the pocket without a word, and said "Good-night."

The man took a few steps away, and then returned and said, with a blustering air, "I s'pose you think you ain't got all your money back? It's all I took, s' help me."

"No," said Selah calmly; "it is fourteen shillings less than you took."

The man uttered an oath, and made a threatening movement towards Selah, who stood quite still with the overcoat on his arm.

"Call yourself an 'opper, do you? What does an 'opper do with all that money, I'd like to know? I'll take my Sam yer a dark 'un, and a jail-bird too."

"No," said Selah, "I have not been in jail; but I believe there are many worse sinners than those who are locked up."

"None o' your chaff," said Jim.

"I am quite in earnest," said Selah patiently. "I believe there are many jail-birds who have not got a worse record than I have. When I was quite a boy I persecuted a weak little chap younger than myself, and I gave him a thrashing

when, you may say, he was dying. I took to drink after he died, and then I ran away from home and made my father very unhappy. I have denied Christ and blasphemed God. These are things for which a man is not imprisoned, but doubtless in God's sight his sin is blacker than the thief's."

Jim Tollet was unable to cope with ethical questions. But he understood the allusion to thieves, and resented it.

"Call me a thief, do you?"

"Yes," said Selah, "I should call you a thief."

He looked gravely with his sad, steadfast eyes at the man, who dropped his blustering air, and began to whimper about his sick child.

"I am sorry your child is ill," said Selah.

He did not move from the spot where he stood, and seemed to be waiting passively for the big, burly rough to take the initiative in everything.

"Take your money!" said the man suddenly; and he drew fourteen shillings from his pocket and flung it into Selah's hand. "Much good may it do you—taking it away from a sick child, who hasn't got as much as a cup of tea to drink before she goes to sleep! Talk about Gawd, do you?"

Why does 'e give some blokes all the cash and others none?"

"I do not know," said Selah gravely.

In spite of some notable exceptions to the contrary, it may be said that of all the wretched shelters where a tired man may lay his head after a day's honest work, the hop-pickers' huts of to-day are the most wretched. Twenty or thirty years ago they were a disgrace to civilization. The hop-pickers herded together in shelters which were not fit for cattle. Disease spread quickly in them. Crime, even murders, were not uncommon, and the language of their inhabitants was filthy beyond description.

The huts towards which Selah Harrison directed his steps this evening were made of hurdles, green with damp, and roughly thatched, the fronts being formed of hop-poles driven into the ground, with a small doorway in the centre. These huts, of which five or six stood close together, each measured eighteen feet by twelve; the sides standing three feet high, and the roof rising to about nine feet. Each one was made to accommodate a "bins company" of men, women, and children—a small allowance of straw being made to each person to sleep upon.

They were built in the corner of a hop-garden, and at the bottom of a high bank; the mud floors were lying in pools of water, and holes in the thinly-covered hurdles showed big patches of daylight through them.

The child, Eliza Tollet, was lying on some damp, mouldy straw. Her eyes were bright and feverish, and her head felt hot as fire. Her father was kneeling beside her in a puddle, trying to tempt her to eat new bread and water-cresses.

When Selah came in he gave her some milk which he had brought with him, and he advised the father to take the little girl to the workhouse infirmary at once. The suggestion was met with indignation by every one in the huts, and the now thoroughly frightened child clung to her father and implored not to be taken to the 'ouse.

There was nothing to be done. No one thought of isolating the child in case she was sickening for an infectious disease. But they invited Jim to "'ave a drop o' something to cheer him up," and they even pressed gin and water to the little girl's lips.

Selah left them, and walked slowly to the oast-house, where he was going to sleep. Passing through the village, he met his old friend Rose

standing at the door of a public-house and selling boot-laces. She greeted Selah with her usual giggle, and told him that she and Joey had come down for the 'op-pickin', but they had not found employment yet, so they were selling "bits o' things" until they should do so. Joey, whom Selah recognized as the red-cheeked scullion, came out of the public-house in a much-elated condition and interrupted the conversation, taking Rose by the arm and insisting, with an unnecessary number of oaths, on moving on. His tottering, uneven steps, and Rose's ragged dress and flaunting hat made an incongruous element in the peaceful village street. The sun had set, and all the world was gray. The hush of evening wrapped it about, and peace itself seemed to have kissed it to sleep. A single star hung like a gem in the clear sky, as though it were revealed as a sign of the better things beyond. And down below on the dusty white road, between the high hedges, Rose carried her box of boot-laces and supported her Joey's uneven steps.

In the morning the wise women at the hoppers' huts decided that Jim Tollet's Eliza had got the measles. The complaint spread rapidly amongst

the underfed, miserable children in the huts. The stupidity of their mothers, under the circumstance, was marvellous. It is true they had but little means of providing comforts for the poor little creatures; for wet weather had set in, and the huts were like a ditch, unfit for a dog to live in. But the medical attendance which they might have had they refused to summon; and their one idea of nursing was to indulge the invalids by offerings of pastry and unripe fruit to tempt their appetites. The rain dripped through the roofs on to the sodden straw and filthy floors, and the fretful little invalids cried and yammered day and night. There would have been but little chance of hop-picking for the mothers if the health-officer had not ordered those children whom it was still possible to remove to the Union.

This hop-picking season was one of more crime than had ever been known in the neighbourhood. Fights were frequent, and the police took away many a man with bandaged head or broken limb. At night the scene outside some of the huts was pandemonium. Like all Londoners, hoppers hate and fear darkness. If they have to walk home any distance after twilight has fallen, they come

in companies, yelling and singing to keep their fears at bay. Arrived at the huts, they kindle huge fires and dance round them, indulging in mirth of the coarsest kind, and engaging in drunken quarrels and hideous oaths. When Selah came amongst them he was treated with chaff of a broad nature from the girls, and sullen looks from the men. The very fact of sickness being in their midst seemed to make occasion for a fiercer sort of fun amongst them.

Certainly the women cried when little Eliza Tollet died, and remarked over and over again, with the senseless reiteration of the uneducated, that "Pore dear! well, she was a nice chahld." But their laughter was as wild as ever at night, and not a single rough hand was held out to Tollet, who sat apart, grim and ugly, all day, and drank himself silly at night.

On Sundays some of them attended Selah's meeting, which he held in a large oast-house; but their conduct was irreverent in the extreme during the singing and the prayers, and if from curiosity they listened to his short address, their laughter and giggles and unseemly jokes began again as soon as he had finished.

CHAPTER V.

SAID Miss Temple to her mother, "Do you know, mamma, I believe there is a sort of clergyman down here with the hop-pickers this year."

"Do you mean the man who was had up before your father?"

"It must be the same, I think," said Constance.

For Selah had been obliged to use his fists one night, and had nearly knocked the life out of a bully who was ill-using a child; and the police had interfered, with the result that Selah was summoned before the magistrates at Maidstone.

His answers in Court had gained for him a little notoriety amongst the Bench and their friends, to whom they told the story. They dubbed the man a fanatic, but enjoyed retailing his remarks, in an exaggerated north-country accent, over their port wine and walnuts in the evening.

"Your father says that on entering the Court he was heard to murmur, 'Peace be to this house and all who are in it.' Most irreverent, I think."

"But I like what he said about the hop-pickers," said Constance. "He seemed so much in earnest; and Tom says he actually lives amongst them, so he must know how they feel. And, indeed, their lives seem to be very wretched."

"Those sort of people don't feel things," said Lady Temple.

She and her daughter were sitting in the beautiful drawing-room at High Temple. Heavy yellow satin curtains hung across the windows, and framed a splendid view of timbered park and open country beyond. The delicately-tinted walls were hung with rare pictures, and lined with quaint old cabinets filled with priceless china. There were flowers everywhere—banks of gay plants and feathery palms, and on the tables were late roses and top-heavy stephanotis from the greenhouses. The broad polished floor was covered with Oriental rugs, and the afternoon tea equipage, with its glittering silver and egg-shell china, was drawn up in the embrasure of a deep window overlooking the deer-park.

"Those sort of people don't feel things," repeated Lady Temple. And she really thought what she said.

She leaned back easily in her deep-cushioned chair, and further remarked, with a plaintive sigh, that the smell of roses and stephanotis was certainly a little oppressive in a room.

Constance came forward and removed a tall Venetian glass filled with the sweet, helpless, top-heavy blossoms from the table at her mother's elbow. When she had come from the shelter of the yellow curtains where she had been sitting, you saw that she was a very goodly person to look upon. Tall and straight and slender, with bright brown hair, and a clear, fair skin; she had an air of perfect good-breeding, and a touch of haughtiness in the pose of her head, relieved by the unconscious sweetness of her expression. A delightful open-air frankness—the frankness of our hunting, walking, open-air English girls—charmed one by its vigorous touch; and the sweet unselfishness, of which Constance Temple never suspected herself because it was inherent in her nature, made her face lovable and delightful all at once.

The four Misses Nepean at the vicarage said that she had too many admirers—and they ought to have known if any one did. They spent half

their time at High Temple, and were sufficiently intimate with Constance to borrow her horses, copy her hats, and supply their dessert dishes from her father's hothouses. They often spoke seriously to her about heartlessness; and they had even been known to go so far as to give delicate warnings to guests who came to High Temple to shoot, and, alas, who stayed to fall in love! But it is sad to have to relate that their words seemed most often to fall on deaf ears.

Why, only last week Isabel Nepean "could not help hearing" (as she told her sisters) Tom Temple talking to his sister, and saying that "Philip was awfully cut up;" and Constance's reply that "she was miserable too, but that really and truly, Tom, it wasn't her fault."

After tea Constance jumped up and announced that she was going to take some exercise.

"My dear child," said Lady Temple, "you are always taking exercise or giving the dogs exercise. Do you *never* feel tired?"

"Never!" replied Constance, laughing. "I often try to arrive at the sensation, but it isn't a bit of use. Can I do anything for you in the village, mamma?"

"I have never found," said Lady Temple, "that the village could produce anything but stamps, and occasionally a postal order for a sum one does not require. But if you want an object for your walk" (Lady Temple herself had never been known to take a walk without an object), "you might call on Mrs. Dudgeon, and find out from her what is the truth about Mary Jenkins. These village affairs are so romantic sometimes."

Constance set out for her walk—warily at first, for the long avenue leading to the village was the route always chosen by the Misses Nepean when they took their walks abroad. And all four sisters being sociably inclined, had a friendly way of inquiring the destiny of any one whom they met, and offering to "turn and walk a little way" with them.

It was not long before Constance sighted the well-known checked tweed dresses and gaiters!

The Misses Nepean's clothing was always a painful travesty on Constance Temple's; and since Constance had got a neat dark tweed and a plain felt hat, they had assumed a manly style of dress, and the vicarage umbrella-stand was filled with determined-looking walking-sticks.

“I fly!” exclaimed Constance, her eyes dancing with amusement. She disappeared with a bound into some rhododendron bushes by the side of the river, and pushed on, dividing the thick undergrowth with her arms almost as though she were swimming through the tangle of green. She paused on the edge of the park. “I’ll take the long round to the village by the fields. Ah!” fanning herself with a broad leaf, “that was a merciful escape.”

It was a lonely walk by the field-paths to the village, but Constance’s healthy mind had no thought of fear. Even when she came across a group of hop-pickers sitting under a hedge and drinking tea out of hoppers’ tins, it did not occur to her, although she was quite alone, to feel any alarm.

A woman rose quickly from the unsavoury picnic party under the hedge, and stood across the narrow field-path in front of Constance. Her manner was impertinent, but her words were simply the whining of the professional beggar.

“Spare a copper, laidy. Do spare a copper for a pore woman. I’ve been working all daiy, laidy, and my little gell ill too. Spare a copper, for Gawd’s sake, laidy!”

Constance, after much fumbling in the folds of her dress to find her pocket, produced her purse—a well-filled one—and gave the woman a shilling. She was passing on, when a ruffianly-looking fellow, sunburnt and collarless, jumped up and advanced towards her with a threatening air.

“That ain’t enough,” he said brutally. “Me and my mates is ‘avin’ a bad season this year, and we ain’t ‘ardly got wot ‘ull buy us victuals. ‘And over that purse, an’ don’t make no bother about it either.”

Constance looked helplessly round. It might be hours before any one passed that way. And yet, with the pluck of a long line of fighting ancestors in her, she rebelled against giving up her property under compulsion.

“You shall not take my purse!” she said haughtily, and put her hands behind her back.

Perhaps it was the worst thing she could have done; for while it revealed her fighting instinct, it also revealed her weakness.

The man seized her arms the next instant, and tried to reach the purse behind her back.

The nearness of the brute, the smell of his

fustian clothes, and the ugly, unshaved face so close to hers, filled the girl with horror.

"Let me go! let me go!" she cried, and dropping the purse, tore herself free.

The man picked up the purse, but gripped her by the arm again.

"Don't you peach on me to the perlice, or I'll make it 'ot for yer." His grip upon her arm was like iron, and Constance felt faint with fear and pain.

"Oh, let me go!" she cried.

And just then it was that Selah Harrison came in view. He was on the other side of the hedge, but he cleared it at a bound when he saw what was going on.

"Give up that purse, Jim Tollet," he said, without raising his voice. But Constance noticed a curious sort of tension in him as he spoke. It seemed as though he was impelling his hearer by a power outside himself, yet which required all his strength to use.

"Give up that purse, Jim Tollet," he said. And the girls under the hedge began to giggle.

"Look 'ere," said Jim, "wot right have you got to interfere? You are always nosing about, as

far as I can see. Wot d'ye mean by it? Wot right 'ave you got to interfere?"

"I have the right to prevent you sinning, if I can."

Constance thought he was going to say, "I have a right to save a helpless girl." And it vaguely disappointed her that her good-looking deliverer seemed to think more of Jim Tollet's sin than of her distress.

To her infinite surprise, the same good-looking deliverer then crossed the road, and laid his hand kindly on the man's dirty fustian shoulder.

"You've been in awful trouble, Jim," she heard him say; "don't let it make you a worse man. I've been through that; and it's hell on earth, man."

He had taken the purse from the man's almost passive hands as he spoke, and he now handed it to Constance.

"Oh, I can't take it back!" cried the girl impulsively; "it is dirty."

She looked at Jim Tollet's filthy, cruel hands and shuddered.

"You can take the money out of it," said Selah gravely.

"No, no!" cried Constance. "Let them have it. They look poor, and it has all been so dreadful!"

Prepared to defend her property with her life one moment, and refusing it when it was restored to her the next. Yet they say that women are reasonable beings. Perhaps they are. At any rate, their instincts are fine.

She divided the money amongst the wretched women by the hedge, and then Selah turned to walk home with her.

"That was a very foolish thing to do," he said.

Constance, being unaccustomed to hear her actions called foolish, turned with a look of wonder in her eyes (they were very beautiful eyes) towards the young man.

"Oh!" she said, a little blankly. Then added, "They looked so poor." And finally she put the matter on a personal footing by saying appealingly, "And I have been so frightened."

"You encouraged sin," said Selah, the more sternly because the appealing voice had a disturbing effect upon him.

"I won't do it again," said Constance meekly.

She turned another curious glance on the young man stalking along by her side, and

looking straight in front of him as though unconscious of her presence.

"I think I have heard about you," she said in her frank, delightful way. "You are here with the hop-pickers, are you not?"

"Yes," said Selah, the man of few words.

"Is it customary for a—a clergyman to come to the various hop-picking districts with the pickers?" asked the girl.

"I believe not; if it is, I have not heard of it. I have never been here before."

"It must do good!" explained Constance, with a pretty touch of sympathy and approbation in her voice.

"There have been more crimes and more drunkenness this season than have ever been known before."

"Oh, they are dreadful people!" she cried, shuddering at the recollection of her late fright.

"They are," said Selah, "what their surroundings make them."

"Tell me about them," said Constance, impulsively. "Perhaps I condemn them because I know so little about them. Do you know many poor people? Do you live amongst them in London?"

He told her something about East London and its inhabitants, but his speech was awkward, and he began to hear his country accent when he talked to this girl. He drew no dramatic picture of the suffering poor—he had not the power of giving pathetic and telling touches to his tale, and the old forgotten delicacy of thirty years ago forbade his touching upon the darkest side of London life when he spoke to a woman. He pleaded very badly the cause of the poor! The thorn of shyness was in his flesh again, and it seemed to him a very buffeting of Satan, making speech difficult and laborious.

“Do the same poor people generally come to the hop-gardens?” said Constance, in order to help him out with his story. And her voice was a little gentler than usual, because this poor man was evidently so very shy.

“Yes,” said Selah; “it’s their one outing in the year; and it might do them good if they were decently housed and cared for, instead of being treated like the beasts of the fields.”

“Are they very badly housed on Sir John Temple’s estate?” asked Constance wistfully. She had never been inside a hopper’s hut in her life.

“Yes,” said Selah; “and it is killing their bodies. We have God’s word for it that it cannot destroy their souls.”

“I think,” said Constance with a beautiful blush, and two tears born of shame gathering in her eyes—“I think I ought, perhaps, to tell you that I am Miss Temple.”

“Yes,” replied Selah, without confusion; “I thought you were Miss Temple.”

Constance was thinking that there was a desperate simplicity about shy men. Perhaps it is only they who are audacious. The tactful man never stumbles on plain truths.

“I should like to do something for these hop-pickers,” said Constance.

She wanted to do something for the hop-pickers—but more, I am afraid, she wanted to gain the good opinion of this man who was disposed to be so very severe towards her. She thought she would go down to the huts with one of her brothers to-morrow morning, and say a few pleasant words to the hoppers. Doubtless Mr. Harrison would be very grateful, and would think it very charming of her to do so.

“You might do much,” said Selah.

“Will you meet us, then, to-morrow?” she said. He might show a little more interest, and applaud her resolves!

“Yes, I will meet you, and take you to the huts.”

It was another worker in the vineyard. Being such, he had the courage to look at the girl beside him, and in so doing he exposed a joint in his armour. He had almost instinctively cried out, “No, no! they’re not fit for you to see. Don’t come!” But he distrusted instincts. It was part of his creed to do so. He checked all spontaneous wishes, and slew them with Bible texts. To-day he repeated to himself, “No man hath hired us.” The pitiful cry of the unemployed! Who was he that he dared deny work in the vineyard to this fair girl who had pleaded for it?

“The children have measles,” he said, struggling weakly, and with the joint in his armour still exposed.

“But I’ve had measles!” cried Constance. “There isn’t the least danger; and I could bring the children grapes and things.”

“God give you your reward,” he said; “it will be a good work. But I wish you would not come.”

CHAPTER VI.

HAVE you never seen the Weald of Kent on a misty September morning? It is like a sea of silver when the dawn comes, but the sky is clear overhead, and the promise of the sun flames in the east, turning it rosy-red. The still air hardly breathes, but it is cool and clear as when one stands upon a mountain-top, and the silence is a living silence without any sadness in it at all. Strange shapes begin to appear in the silver sea, the tops of trees upraise themselves from it, and the high ground at Goudhurst stands up like a mountain in the indefinite light. Then the sun bursts forth in his old, grand, kingly way—strong like a king, and happy like a bridegroom! The regretful silver mists that all night long have wrapped the brown fields and the fragrant gardens of hops, melt and grow thin at his coming. The stars, like faithful nurses who have watched

all night, put out their tiny lamps and creep away to bed. And day is here!—the sunny glad autumn day in Kent.

The birds had not forgot to sing, although the first white frosts had come. They were doing their best to burst their throats with song when Constance awoke in the morning.

She jumped up and threw wide her windows, letting in the song of the birds and the wholesome, clean smell of the dewy fields, and the splendid morning sunshine.

“Quite a cold bath, please, Goodman,” she said to her maid, who appeared yawning at the door.

The vigorous early-morning life was bounding through her veins; and Constance herself looked like a part of the morning.

“And, please, Goodman, put out a nice, clean, crispy sort of dress for me. The sun is so warm; and I want to look nice.”

She ran down to breakfast, singing as she went; her fresh, crisp dress rustling about her, and her well-brushed, bright hair catching the sunshine from the high staircase windows. She beat a tattoo on Tom’s door as she passed, and told him to get

up, and then went on singing till the breakfast-room was reached. The dogs by the fireplace leaped upon her, and gave her a royal welcome; the coffee was steaming in its tall, silver pot; and the early post had brought just the music she wanted, and two delightful packets of "patterns." Everything in Constance's pleasant world had a happy knack of being quite right, and just as she wanted it to be. It was a world of luxury, of abundance, of beauty, and refinement; and the girl's own charming freshness and radiance seemed like a daily acknowledgment of her good fortune.

She poured out tea and coffee for her father and her three tall brothers, who were all at home, and were all late for breakfast; and she cut big slices of brown bread for herself, and ate them with a splendid appetite and lots of fresh butter and honey.

"And now," she said, "which of you is going to take me to visit the hop-pickers' children?"

Reginald protested against his sister's going to the huts at all.

"It isn't the place for you," he said.

"But I'm only going to the Union Infirmary to take the sick children some grapes," said Con-

stance. "And Mr. Harrison will be there—he said he would be. You don't mind my going, do you, father?"

Sir John Temple—a weak man where his daughter was concerned—said, "If you go between ten and eleven o'clock, when none of the hoppers can be there, I have no objection. But, of course, you must not go alone."

"I think Tom is coming with me," said Constance, and she looked up at her favourite brother and smiled in a confident way.

"Oh, I'll take you," said Tom (also weak), "if I haven't got to say anything."

"The missionary spirit is not strong in Tom," quoth George.

"Talking of that, it is a great mistake," said Sir John, "this Mr. Harrison coming down here and holding meetings for the hop-pickers. They ought to come to church."

"He doesn't seem to do much good either," said Reginald. "It's the rowdiest season amongst the hop-pickers there has been for years."

"And there's more sickness too," said George. "They say——"

"Oh, come," said Tom, "the poor beggar did not bring the measles."

"Let us start," said Constance; and she and her brother set off for their walk.

They went through the woods where the golden sunshine lay warm on the damp, rough paths, and the pheasants rose with a whir and a gleam of gold on their wings. Golden sunshine flickered through the trees overhead, and golden sunshine was turning the bracken into a carpet of gold on which gods might tread. The lake in the wood was a splendid mirror, which reflected the trees and the bracken in long, calm streaks of colour; and the gamekeeper's house in the clump of firs made a Birket-Foster picture which he ought to have been there to paint.

Constance caught up one of the keeper's children in her arms as she passed the gate, and kissed its chubby pink face, then set it on its sturdy legs to toddle to its mother again.

"I think I should like to catch the birds and kiss them this morning," she said, with a laugh. "O Tom, isn't it jolly to be alive?"

"Ripping," said Tom.

The sky was blue—a splendid royal blue, measureless and flawless, that reached to heaven itself. In peaceful hollows little red-roofed villages slept in the sun, nearly buried in gray-green orchards. And the goodly smell of the fields and “the brown old earth” was scenting all the air.

Selah Harrison was waiting for them—a tall, black figure, standing patiently by a gate. He came forward as the brother and sister approached, and shook hands with them in his quiet, grave way.

“I am afraid we have kept you waiting,” said Constance brightly. “Have you been here long?”

Selah drew out his watch and looked at it. “Thirty-five minutes,” he said simply.

“Oh, what a bore for you!”

“I liked it, thank you,” said Selah; “it was pleasant in the sun.”

He led them into a long, bare infirmary, where sunshine seldom came, but immediately afterwards he seemed anxious that they should leave. His sensitiveness made him dread that even the children might use foul words—as he knew full well they could—and he turned to Constance in her fresh pink gown and garlanded hat and said,—

"If you have given the fruit, I would not wait any longer."

But the girl was kneeling in all her freshness by the side of a puny child, and tempting her with the downy fruit she had brought. Her eyes had tears in them as she held up the fruit playfully to the child; and she turned impulsively to Selah, the glistening dew-drops still hanging on her long lashes.

"Ah, the poor little things!" she cried. "Let me stay with them for a little while. It is miserable for them being in here on this glorious day."

"Yes, stay," said Selah. And suddenly a bar of bright sunlight came through the window, and lighted up the humble dwelling and the bare, cold walls. He walked to the doorway, and smiling one of his rare smiles, said, "Yes, it is a glorious day—a most glorious day."

"See, I have made this little person laugh!" cried Constance, delighted. "To-morrow, Amy (she says her name is Amy)—to-morrow I shall bring you some toys and a picture-book."

"We are shooting to-morrow," said Tom.

"Oh! and Goodman walks so slowly!—Mr.

Harrison," she said impulsively, "will you take care of me again as you did the other evening? I want to bring these poor little things some toys, and I can't come through the wood in hopping-time alone."

She was only thinking of the sick children, and Selah thanked God for another worker in the vineyard, and thought that this was the cause of his exultation.

"You have made the children very happy," he said to her as she wished him good-bye. "I am glad you are coming again to-morrow."

When she had gone the sun still shone, but it had lost its wonderful golden colour. The children grew fretful again, and the bare walls and high windows looked prison-like and cold. Only the grapes looked beautiful—the big, downy, purple grapes in their bed of cotton-wool.

That evening a strange feeling took possession of this man whose life was bound up with the poor and wretched for whom he worked and prayed—a feeling of utter repulsion towards them and everything connected with them. When he came to the huts he saw two Irishwomen fighting,

tearing each other's faces till the blood came, and pulling out handfuls of each other's hair. He felt as though he hated them—his poor, down-trodden sisters who had never a chance, and who, but for the accident of their birth, might be living in stately houses and wearing gay dresses like any lady in the land. Surely they had never been so filthy in their speech nor so foolish in all their thoughts and ways. His very work amongst them seemed contaminated by their sordidness; and mingled with his feeling of disgust came the sense of the hopelessness of it all. He seemed to see the crowded streets of East London, and for ever the streaming line of humanity pacing there. And always the dull, sodden faces; always the poverty and the brutality and the ugliness of it; always the flaunting girls, and the pale-faced, tired women; always and for ever the sound of a bitter cry.

The vision frightened him—the quiet, unimaginative man; and he turned from it with a feeling of despair, mingled with a physical repulsion which it was impossible to control.

The next morning, when he walked with Constance through the scented, sun-flecked wood

(Constance in her garlanded hat again to-day, and another fresh pink gown), she almost spoke his thought of the night before.

"Isn't it sad work sometimes?" she said, as she walked beside him in her freshness and beauty; and the clear, girlish voice had always a touch of gentleness in it for this shy, awkward man. "Doesn't the ugliness of it all depress you sometimes?"

"Not when one is busy down in Stepney," he answered. "Indeed, the ugliness never seems to strike one till one has left it, and has seen some very lovely thing."

He was not looking at her, so he did not see her blush scarlet. And the next moment Constance told herself that she was a conceited goose.

"Of course the work itself is beautiful," said Constance, "because it is unselfish—whatever the surroundings may be."

"I had not thought of that," said Selah.

"You give up your life to it?" she asked.

"I am an unsuccessful worker," he replied. "It has not pleased God to turn many hearts to Him through my words."

"Yet you work on! That seems to me very brave."

"No, no," cried Selah, and he put out his hand as though he were warding off some unseen foe. And perhaps he was saying, as Samson used to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." "No, no! My own powers of work are useless."

"Yet see how the children love you!" said Constance.

"Yes," replied Selah fiercely; "and only last night I hated their poor mothers and the sad-faced, flaunting girls—their sisters and mine. Poor, shepherdless sheep that only love can lead! I hated my life and called it ugly, as if I were one who had the right to crave ease, or seek rewards which were never my Master's."

"I wish I could comfort him," thought Constance. "It must be dreadful to take oneself to task like this for every little fault or careless thought."

"One can't help one's thoughts," she said, smiling kindly, and speaking in a way that was half maternal, half consoling. "And, indeed," she went on, "your poor people are not always nice. I hated the man who took my purse the other

night! I really did hate him, and I think," breaking into a laugh, "if I were to begin to think about it I should hate him again!"

"Ah," he said weakly—culpably weakly, "it's different for you."

"Why?" said Constance, opening her frank eyes, and with the laughter very near them again.

"You could not hate wickedly," Selah replied. He had never seen anything so beautiful and radiant as Constance when she turned to him in the sun-flecked woodland path, and asked him, with eyes full of laughter, "Why?" He is to be pardoned, I think, if for a moment he forgot that all mankind are born in sin and desperately wicked—even beautiful Constance Temple.

"I should like to do something to help you while you are here," she exclaimed quickly. "You work too much alone. Couldn't I make clothes for the children, or something?"

And this time Constance was not really thinking very much of the needs of the poor little children in the infirmary. She was only being kind to a grave-faced, sad-eyed mission-worker in rough black clothes. And it is to be feared that, had the

conscientious Misses Nepean known of it, they would have expressed strong disapproval.

"Clothing is much required by the children," said Selah.

"Goodman shall cut out the garments," cried Constance, full of the business at once, "and I'll sew them. We'll measure the children, Mr. Harrison; it will be great fun!"

And work amongst the poor became, for the first time in the whole of Selah Harrison's ministry, a joyous, a laughter-giving, a glad thing.

For Constance told the convalescent children to stand up, and she measured the tiny, thin figures with string—for she had no yard-measure. And then she made Selah count the inches on his thumb, and interrupted him every time he began to do so; so that he lost count, and at last, to the children's great delight, began to smile, and said with a sudden daring and an overwhelming blush, "that this new dressmaker talked too much to allow him to count."

"No, no!" cried Constance, taking away the string from him with a whisk which lost all the inches he had counted; "it's your thumb

that's all wrong. It's far too big to measure inches!"

The children screamed with delight. And Constance said that you could measure a yard if you put one end of a bit of string in your mouth and held the other end at arm's length.

"'E'd measure a yard and an 'arf, I 'specs," cried a tiny scrap of a boy, dancing about with glee.

"We'll 'ave trines if 'e measures us!" said a precocious girl, with a sharp monkey-face and big eyes.

And Constance made child's fun with the little unchildish people, and said that if they had trains they must come to Court, of course.

"I down't want to go to the court," quoth the big-eyed child, beginning to cry. "It's dark down our court; and there's rats."

"What does she mean?" asked Constance, bewildered.

Then when Selah had explained the Stepney children's notion of a court, she had to wipe out the ugly picture by giving a glowing account of Buckingham Palace on a Drawing-room day.

After that there was nothing for it but to go

through the whole performance of being presented to her Majesty.

A turned-up basket formed a throne for Constance, for, of course, the Queen must receive her Stepney guests seated upon a throne, and with a crown upon her head. She spread out the pink skirts in a regal fashion, and twisted half a dozen bright chrysanthemums into her hair to serve as a crown.

"Mr. Harrison shall be Lord Chamberlain, and call out your names," she cried.

She was enjoying the game as much as any child in the room.

So Selah stood by her side and announced each of the duchesses in turn, for every little girl had elected to be a duchess; but the boys were mostly captains, and put on martial airs:

"This is the Duchess of Vauxhall," Constance would say, having learnt from what district the child came; and Selah said after her, "The Duchess of Vauxhall."

She was rather surprised how badly he did it. She thought young clergymen always understood children, and entered into all their games, and got

on with them. Selah, gravely reading out the titles of the Duchesses of Vauxhall, Stepney, and Poplar from the old envelopes they presented to him, made an incongruous figure—irresponsive, awkward, dull.

“You must do it better,” said Constance, looking up at him from her throne, and smiling into his eyes. “You are a very bad actor, do you know?”

Then she seemed to see that there was some image before the eyes of this man—some sad image that she could not perceive, but could only guess at. She rose in her impulsive way, and stood close beside him so that the children might not hear what she said.

“They are all duchesses,” she said; and though she was still smiling, her voice had a ring of distress in it—of sympathy and persuasion. “Forget that they are anything else for a little while! Don’t remember that they are wicked little sinners, and that their clothes are rags, and their knees stick through their stockings. Forget all the sad part of it this morning!”

“I can’t,” said Selah tragically. “I never look

at them but I remember what their lives are, and what they will be. There are so few that escape from the power of evil—indeed, there is so little way of escape possible for them.”

And Constance, having no arguments ready, being indeed but a very simple, loving-hearted girl, with no views at all upon the condition of the poor nor their moral welfare, said with sweet inconsequence, “Please be happy to-day. Just for to-day!”

And because she was smiling, Selah smiled back at her, as a man needs must when Constance smiled.

The game came to an end, and Constance pulled the yellow chrysanthemums out of her hair, and flung them into the basket upon which she had been sitting. She put on the rose-trimmed hat again, and said she was ready to go home.

“It’s a pity to waste those yellow chrysanthemums,” said Selah, hesitating about starting.

“They are of no use—I cut the stalks off,” said Constance.—“Good-bye, children.”

“I don’t like to see flowers wasted.”

Men are proverbially obstinate. Selah fetched a

tin of water and put the short-stalked chrysanthemums into it, and placed it on a little wooden stool near a sick child.

"There, Amy!" said Constance; "you have got a pot of flowers all to yourself."

So Amy appropriated the flowers.

In the afternoon, when Selah came back to the infirmary, he hovered round Amy for nearly ten minutes before he said, "May I have one of your flowers, Amy?"

"Thay's my flowers; the laidy give 'em to me," said Amy. "I ain't goin' to part with 'em, see?"

"Oh yes, I see," said Selah.

In the night little Amy ate the chrysanthemums and spat out the petals, chewed and soft. She said she had heard that some 'eathen folk did the same.

CHAPTER VII.

It rained heavily the next day. Constance sat indoors all the morning, and made children's frocks. Lady Temple took a little gentle exercise through the greenhouses, yawned disconsolately, and said, "Why was the country ever invented?" And the hop-pickers sat in the dripping huts and got drunk.

How it rained! both that day, and the next, and the one that followed. Down in the Weald the floods were out, and even here on the hill-side the hop-gardens were a mass of heavy mud. The season was a bad one in every way, and the tally had been set at nine. When a fine day did come the hops were mouldy to pick. And every one knows that though the pay is the same for picking mouldy as it is for picking sound hops, the non-reasoning hop-picker will never work so well when there is a mouldy crop. He grumbles

and abuses the farmer, and drinks more than usual.

When the tally was not lowered there was a wild scene at the huts.

The men had been sulking in sheds and out-houses all day, for the miserable roofing of the huts afforded hardly any protection in wet weather. At night large numbers of them met in the castle yard.

This yard was rather a curious one. In old days it had been the courtyard to the High Temple of that time. Afterwards, when the old house fell into ruins, it had served as a yard to the farm which was built on the foundations of the old house. The farm itself became a ruin in time, and a large new house was built by Sir John Temple's father for old Farmer Springett. It had been proposed that the new house should be built of the materials of the old one. But Sir John Temple's father liked the quaint old place and the curious courtyard with its high walls and big gates. He let it stand as it was. That part of the house which remained standing made excellent out-buildings, and they and the

courtyard served as cattle-lodges and straw-yards for the beasts in winter, and as shelters in autumn for the hop-pickers. It was the very spot for a mass-meeting, and the scene this evening was one of indescribable riot and confusion. The enraged hop-pickers vowed vengeance on the farmer who had raised the tally, and they seasoned their talk with a very wealth of bad language and abuse.

The wild Irish people were the foremost leaders of the row; and the still-faced gipsy-folk, with their blazing eyes, congregated together in a corner and passed strange words to one another. The Cockney contingent were all drunk, and talked madly.

It was they who suggested that the dissatisfied hoppers should march upon Mr. Springett's farm and set fire to it. The people raised a shout and declared, one and all, that "they were game, s' help me!"

Only the gipsy-folk bided together in the corner—still and quiet. And the beautiful gipsy-girls looked on disdainfully at the wild excitement of the Cockneys and the Irish.

Two policemen, with Tom and Reggie Temple who

had turned aside on their way home from shooting in the hope of seeing a row, hovered about outside the high walls of the yard. And the tall, quiet figure of a man stood by the gates watching silently. No one dared to enter the yard that night.

Mr. Springett's nephew had ridden down to speak to the people, and owed the safety of his return to his horse's speed.

About nine o'clock the uproar was at its highest. It was a strange, wild scene, and one not easily forgotten. In defiance of all rule, the hop-pickers had kindled a huge fire in the centre of the yard, and this they fed with armfuls of straw, sticks, and old timber from the sheds.

The flames leaped up grandly, mocking the damp air and the rain.

Round about the fire were gathered the hoppers—uncouth, ragged, half wild with drink and the excitement and rage of the flames. The men swore and fought with each other, and the women raised shrill, harsh voices, and urged them with cowardly courage “to be men now, and not to be put upon; to demand fair wage, and to hell with all the farmers!”

But the gipsies—the dignified people—smiled scornfully at them, and sat in their dark corner and waited.

A pale, consumptive-looking man constituted himself spokesman for the disaffected. He made a rambling speech, full of personal matter, in which he alluded to himself indiscriminately as a true Christian, a Fenian, a Teetotaller, and a Social-reformer. His face was familiar to the man who watched silently by the gate, but it puzzled him to know where he had seen it, until he remembered a walk home to Battersea, and a pale-faced youth who had given him an account of his soul's welfare, and had spoken to him of mission work.

“He said he was converted,” said the man miserably; “and now he stands there half drunk, inciting these mad folk to crime.”

Was there no stability in these people—no foundation upon which one might build? Were they all utterly and egregiously *stupid*? Did they care for nothing but for the moment's excitement, and the unfettered emotion of the hour?

The consumptive-looking man and some others had found a quantity of tar in one of the hop

tarring barrels in the shed. They were making rough torches with it, and the women helped them, raving all the while.

“Now we’re ready!”

They stood up—a weird company—in the blazing red light of the fire. The black shadows deepened round them as the flames leaped up higher. And the ragged children danced about in elfin glee, and flung pieces of burning stick at each other.

Only the gipsy-folk sat quiet, with the firelight blazing in their dark eyes.

“Now we’re ready!”

And as the people shouted this, the gates of the courtyard swung slowly forward.

“With all your weight,” said Harrison.

And the heavy doors swung forward with the pressure of six strong pairs of shoulders.

“And now the bolts!”

There were no bolts.

“We must hold them shut,” he said. “They can’t see us, and they don’t know how many we are.”

“Ripping!” said Reggie Temple. “Only I wish I had a better foothold than this mud.”

They pressed their weight against the massive wooden doors, while the din inside increased to a roar, and blows rained thick on the oak.

"The Maidstone men can't be here for another hour yet," said Policeman B. 720. "How long, do you think, can we hold the gate, sir?"

"Till doomsday!" cut in Tom, heaving his shoulder against the stout lintels as a chink of light showed itself between the doors. "Shove all you know how, Bobby, and give them beans if they show their noses above the doors."

The din inside increased to frenzy.

"They may murder each other if they don't get out soon," said Selah.

He was leaning his great strength like a rock against the doors, and listening for every variation in the tumult. His eyes burned with a curious glow, and his face had a tense look as of one who knows the worst—and waits.

"Why are the doors so hot?" said Reggie.

At the same moment a red-hot glow appeared at their feet.

"They're firing the doors!" shouted one of the policemen.

"Devils!" said Reggie, below his breath.

"Can you hold them at all, sir, if they get out?" asked the man next Selah. He had been at one of Mr. Harrison's meetings, and knew something of his personal influence amongst the people.

"No," said Selah quietly; "they are out of hand. I know them."

There was no longer any pressure upon the door, but its stout lintels were kindling rapidly.

"Wait till the wood is well alight," said Harrison, and his voice had a ring of authority in it. "When it is well ablaze it will prevent their getting out for a time; and we must get away and warn the people at the farm."

The Springetts were old people living quietly, and with but few servants in the house. Selah found the old man sitting in his parlour, grasping his keys and vowing that no one should make him give up his possessions.

"Show your guns at the windows," said Harrison to Tom and Reggie; "but God help the man who fires first!"

He had hardly spoken before they heard the approach of the hop-pickers.

They came up irregularly, walking with their shambling, Cockney step, and stumbling in the mud. The rain descended in sheets, and their ill-made torches spluttered and went out. The men swore and groped on slowly, calling to each other from time to time to know "where they had got to." The black night was all around them, and the gusty rain swept across their faces. The fear of darkness fell upon them—the haunting fear which has no name. They shouted louder, and tried to relight their torches. But the darkness closed thicker around them, and the blinding rain was in their faces. Their leader talked wildly, and a few of the younger men kept close to him, and marched onward through the rain and the mire. But the band had dwindled in numbers, and the women in the courtyard had flung burning pieces of wood at some who had returned to the fire.

Only about a score of men, rain-soaked and fuddled with drink, reached the farm. A few shots fired over their heads scattered some of these, and the rest were easily secured by the policemen and the farm hands.

Then the wrath of Selah Harrison, the gentle

preacher, the man of peace, broke forth. Perhaps for a moment he forgot that he was a preacher. The blood of the boy who used to fling the Melbury lads, and who had never funk'd a jump nor a fight, nor had turned sick at a blow, was in his veins. He was warm through with the excitement of the night. His lean face was ruddy and keen, and his thick hair was swept in a tangle off his forehead. He strode to the door where the captured men stood in a sullen, dismal group, and he raised his clenched hands towards them as he spoke.

"It's sin and wickedness ye tried to do," he cried to the abject little crowd, and his voice was rough and his speech was rugged, as it ever was in moments of strong excitement. "It's sin and wickedness ye tried to do; and, by my word, I'd have respected ye more if ye had done it! Ye hev'n't the courage to be good, and ye hev'n't the courage to be bad. Ye hev'n't courage to beat any one but your wives. Ye'r afraid of the dark; and ye'r damped by a little rain. A rotten lot ye are, every one of ye."

"Bravo!" said Reggie Temple in his ear. "Bravo, sir!"

Selah's hands dropped suddenly to his sides. He grew very white, and his voice failed him.

"I am worse than any of them," he said, in a low tone—"worse than any of them. God forgive me!"

He walked back to the oast-house, where he was wont to sleep, refusing all Mr. Springett's offers of refreshment. He left Tom and Reggie sipping cherry brandy, having enjoyed their night's adventure hugely. He heard their voices and bursts of laughter as they warmed themselves before the parlour fire and made fun with old Springett.

He walked back alone through the rain, and as he did so, he was thinking entirely of Moses. Moses had cried, "Hear now, ye rebels," assuming an authority which was not his. Moses had been punished. He, Selah Harrison, would be punished also. The two cases were singularly alike; or so, at least, they seemed to this humble-minded, simple-hearted egoist.

He went back to the oast, and flung himself into a corner where some clean straw formed his bed. He did not sleep. Once, when the kiln

stoker on his rounds came near him to attend to the fire, he thought he heard a groan. He listened again, and decided it must have been his fancy only. He finished his stoking, and went and lay down again.

The rain dripped on the roof, and the wind tossed high the branches of the trees, and scattered the yet green leaves upon the roads and fields. The moon came out for a moment, riding grandly on a rack of dark clouds. Now she hid herself, and the darkness closed in again over the hillside and the Weald. The fire went out in the old courtyard, and the burnt doors hung blackened and charred on their iron hinges. The wind went down, and the rain no longer lashed the face—it came down straight and steadily, as though the floor of heaven leaked. It was silent except for the dripping rain.

Then the gipsy-folk arose and came forth in a band, singing softly, and walking to the rhythm of their song. Slowly they came out. The night was nearly over, and there was a whisper of dawn in the air. Their step was free and swinging, as the step of the pavement-bred Cockney never is.

The little band undulated gently to the singing of the girls. They walked up the long lane, and through the bare, stripped fields.

There was a faint light to eastward in the sky.

They walked till they came to the garden of hops, for which they had been offered a tally of ten. And they stood, with the light of the stormy dawn upon their faces, and cursed the hops.

The men held out their hands over the fruit and pronounced the curse. And the women said, "Amen."

"May the Almighty smite these hops so that they shall never be grown unto the profit of him who hath them. Cursed be they—cursed with God's curse, and unprofitable for ever."

And the women said, "Amen."

In a peaceful village in Kent, where the people live to a very great age, there are some old, old men and women who still tell the story of how the hops were cursed.

"They were grubbed up at last," say they, "and the field is sown with wheat. Because no one could ever make a profit out of the cursed hops."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE following day was Sunday—a dripping wet Sunday. Sir John Temple shut himself up in his study and slept. Lady Temple had not even got the heart to take a little gentle exercise amongst the chrysanthemums in the big conservatory. She sat all day by the fire, and began to mingle a few pious reflections with her complaints of the country, and talked of the wider opportunities afforded by the life of towns. The boys—Reggie, George, and Tom—consumed unlimited quantities of tobacco, and insisted upon their sister being with them to cheer them up.

Towards evening it cleared up, and Constance announced her intention of going to church. George promptly sent Reggie an “At Home” card, to which Reggie replied, in the words of the Scotch professor who got a similar invitation, that he presented his compliments, and would also be at home that evening. The faithful Tom was then appealed

to, who replied that he had used so much bad language that day that hymns would not cleanse him; and he thought it better to stay quietly at home and finish all he had to say about wet Sundays in general, and this Sunday in particular.

"But, Tom," said Constance, "I want rather particularly to go."

Constance had been trying to understand herself of late, poor child. And not being of an introspective temperament, the very fact of finding that she required to be understood gave her a restless, puzzled feeling. Her world, in whose happy ordering she so entirely believed, was a little out of gear. Something was wrong. Constance did not know what it was; perhaps the wet weather was depressing. No, it couldn't be that; wet weather had never depressed her before. She began to look forward, to wonder what her future would be, and to feel restlessly dissatisfied with the present.

And because women—the most anthropomorphic of beings—believe in some one who sympathizes with all their moods, the most petulant and trivial as well as the most earnest, Constance decided

that she would go to church. The service would soothe her; the singing of the old tranquil hymns would allay her vague trouble. She would feel better when she had been to church.

"I want rather particularly to go, Tom," she said.

"So be it," said Tom piously. "But remember, Constance, I will not stay to 'Sunday supper' with the Nepeans—not even if they deluge us with messages from 'papa.'"

"Indeed, Tom, I am not dreaming of staying to supper with the Nepeans. They asked me last Thursday, and I refused."

"If they repeat the invitation," said Tom, who knew something of country hospitality, "remember I look to you to get us out of it."

Ah! an invitation in the country is not a light matter, nor one that can be lightly put aside. Woe to that man or woman whom it overtakes suddenly and unawares! It descends heavily and with awful directness. Its effect is paralyzing. All paths of escape are barred; it closes round its wanly-smiling victim with a sort of deadly numbness. It is inexorable as fate, and almost as cruel.

"We can slip out of church the very moment the service is over," said Constance.

The evening had cleared up wonderfully, and a clear, cold light appeared in the western sky. It was reflected in big puddles all down the long drive, as the brother and sister walked briskly to the village church.

"It was nice of you to come, Tom," said Constance.

"No, it wasn't," said Tom stoutly. "It's jolly after the rain. Besides, I rather want to talk to you about something."

Tom looked straight before him, and cleared his throat.

"Well, Tom?"

"Well, I hope you won't think it cheek. But I thought I would ask you if you would mind my asking Philip Napier down here for the pheasant shooting?"

"Of course I don't mind," said Constance quickly.

"He is a good fellow," said Tom.

"Oh, I know—I know!"

"And would make any girl happy." Tom spoke with the acquired wisdom of nineteen years.

"But I can't care for him in that way, Tom; really I can't. Don't speak as though you thought I ever would. He knows—I told him when he was here last time. If he comes again it must be to shoot and see you; there will be other people in the house, and I would not have to see much of him."

"He is a good fellow," said Tom doggedly.

"Tom!" cried Constance, "you are not trying to be a match-maker, are you?"

"You will have to marry some day," quoth Tom sententiously.

"I don't think I shall. I think I am going to be an old maid, Tom."

"You had better publish that fact," he said, his eyes twinkling.

"I really mean it," said Constance.

When they reached the little church and were seated in their pew, with the lamplight full upon them, Tom gave his sister a curious look. The conclusion he arrived at, after a meditative stare, was that Constance had been moped for the last few days, and that girls were queer creatures.

"I shouldn't wonder if she were fond of Philip,

after all," he said to himself. "I believe they often refuse the fellow they care about. Heaven only knows why."

He looked at Constance again when they were singing one of the hymns.

"Lead, kindly Light," sang the shrill-voiced village choir-boys, and the congregation lagged after them in sonorous fashion,—

"Lead Thou me on ;
The night is dark, and I am far from home."

Were two tears just overflowing the big gray eyes ?

"Lead Thou me on."

Constance was crying. Tom had never seen her cry since she was a child, and it made him utterly miserable. What could be the matter ?

When they knelt down he pushed his hassock nearer hers, and knowing only one form of consolation, generally considered effectual in their childish days, he drew forth and handed her his pocket-handkerchief.

"Don't, Tom," said Constance, giving his hand a squeeze.

"I'll ask Philip down," said Tom to himself with conclusive emphasis. "She's got nothing to cry about, unless it is that she cares for him. Girls always cry a good deal when they are in love."

The girls whom Tom knew, and upon whose conduct he based his theories about womankind, lived, it must be remembered, thirty years ago, before blushing was a forgotten art, and ringlets and tears were still known and generally went together.

His offer of a hanky having been rejected, Tom fussed kindly over his sister as they came out of church. It had begun to rain again, and Constance had no waterproof.

"What would she do?" Tom asked.

"Perhaps it will clear soon," said Constance, lingering a moment in the porch. "O Tom, here they are!"

"Will you make a bolt for it?" whispered Tom quickly.

"I dare not; it would look so rude!"

"Say I've run home to fetch a macintosh."

"Tom, don't desert me!"

But Tom was off at a good round trot, and Constance was at the mercy of the hospitable.

The four Misses Nepean, in black cloth jackets, came bustling into the porch. They had a proprietary way of behaving towards the church and its congregation, not unknown amongst many clergymen's families. During service there was no one within five pews of them who was not supplied with hymn books by the vicarage party. Children who sat near the Misses Nepean were kept in order by admonitory pats on the head; and it was a common occurrence for one of the sisters to stand up on the seat of a pew during service and adjust a lamp which she considered was burning too high or too low. They enjoyed an excuse for making a journey to the vestry for a forgotten leaflet or Canticle, and turned the handle of this mysterious chamber door without the preliminary knock required by the lay members of the congregation.

They fell upon Constance in the porch, and began talking more loudly than any one who did not consider the church her private property would have done.

“Mr. Tom gone for a waterproof? Well, Constance must come to the vicarage and await his return there. Wait in the porch? Oh, nonsense; she would die of cold!”

It was quite useless to protest. And then the Vicar, who loved Constance dearly, linked his arm through hers as they walked across the churchyard to the vicarage under one umbrella, and said,—

“I want you to stay and sup with us to-night. My boy has returned home unexpectedly, and the girls—they are good girls—are a little bit inclined to be down upon Richard, I think. Richard says very little, but I’m afraid he sometimes thinks that his sisters do not welcome him home very cordially. Now you are always so good to him, Constance. I want you to make his first evening at home a pleasant one.”

“Oh, I shall stay with pleasure,” said Constance, so cordially that the Vicar’s heart gave a leap and sank again. No one but he himself knew what a good fellow Richard was—he was a man not likely to appeal to a girl’s fancy. No, Constance was only divinely kind to him as she was to every one else.

“Mr. Harrison is coming to supper also,” said the

Vicar. "The girls tell me you know him. He is a strange fellow—a very strange fellow, and terribly in earnest."

"Perhaps he has already arrived," said Constance, as they stood on the doorstep to shake the wet umbrella. She looked up at the plain little ivy-clad house, and realized for the first time that it was a square house built of gray stone, and rather small and ugly.

"I wanted to speak to him about one of my parishioners who got mixed up with that row the other night," the Vicar went on. "Otherwise I believe that Mr. Harrison is much too shy to enjoy meeting strangers."

An elderly woman-servant opened the door, letting out a stream of light from the hall-lamp on to the little wet carriage-drive and the dripping laurels.

"Walk in, my dear," said the Vicar.

"If Tom comes," said Constance, hesitating on the threshold, "I think I ought perhaps to return with him."

But Tom, the coward, had sent a footman with the mackintosh.

At the drawing-room door the Vicar paused. "Entertain Mr. Harrison for a few minutes, will you, Constance? I forgot to bring up the wine to-day, and Alice will never forgive me if it is forgotten."

The drawing-room lamp being in requisition for the dining-room, the little room was lit by firelight only when Constance entered.

A long figure rose from a chair near the fire. Selah Harrison looked peculiarly tall in the little room, and the uncertain light, casting strange shadows, added to his appearance of height.

"How do you do?" said Constance, holding out her hand. "The Misses Nepean are still busy in church, I believe, but they will be home in a few minutes."

"How do you do?" said Harrison. He stood up awkwardly, and worked his eyebrows up and down.

"Please sit down," said Constance.

He drew forward the smallest chair in the room and sat down on it, his knees at an awkward angle to the rest of his body, and his strong bony hands clasped round them. In spite of its awkwardness,

his attitude accentuated his appearance of latent strength. The broad shoulders were bent forward as when a rower bends to an oar; his fine head, with its crop of tough dark hair, was set on a lean, muscular-looking throat; and the long arms embracing his knees were sinewy, with flat wrists, on which the muscles stood out like cords.

The firelight from the vicarage grate fell, indeed, upon two very good-looking people; and beauty being a compelling quality, both were vividly aware of the other's presence.

"I want to hear about the sick children," said Constance, conquering the, to her, perfectly novel sensation of not knowing what to say.

"Thank you," replied Selah. "The children are for the most part back at the infirmary with bad coughs and lung troubles."

"Oh, they *didn't* let the poor mites go back to the huts," cried Constance.

"Yes," replied Harrison; "their mothers would have it so. They are useful for picking hops."

"But some of them were such babies!"

"All the hop-pickers are going to leave the low-lying gardens to-morrow," he said with what con-

solation he could muster; the ring of distress in the girl's voice producing in him the old wish to protect her at all costs.

"The river is in flood," said Constance. "I believe even the bridge was under water last night. But I suppose they will take the hoppers across in wagons."

"I suppose so."

There was a long pause. The firelight flickered on the ceiling and on the simple furniture of the room. The rain dripped on the laurel bushes outside. It seemed to these two that they were very much alone in the little vicarage drawing-room.

"I should like to do more for the poor," said Constance at last. Her voice was low, and seemed to accord with the soft light of the fire. "I do so little. The house is nearly always full when we are down here, and I enjoy myself and forget other things. I suppose"—wistfully—"I lead a very selfish life. Do you think I do?"

Selah fought for a moment with his country accent, stammered badly, and said in rather a headlong manner, "I couldn't judge you."

The warm colour leaped suddenly to Constance

Temple's face. Her hands trembled a little, and she began talking rapidly, a little inconsequently.

"I must seem to you to live a very useless life," she said. "I go and see our own tenants, but then I enjoy that! I don't do any good to any one, I'm afraid. And I should feel so shy of talking about the Bible and that sort of thing, unless they began it."

"Your beauty alone should be a great power," said Selah; and he had no idea he had said a daring thing.

"I might go and visit in some of the cottages at the far end of the village," she said, speaking still more hurriedly. "They are a very wild, rough lot down there."

The man and the enthusiast were having a struggle in Selah Harrison. He knew something of the inhabitants of the cottages at the far end of the village.

"I wouldn't go there," he said at last, slowly.

Constance gave a little laugh. "Why am I to be taken so much care of?" she said.

She had risen, as though to put an end to the conversation, and Selah rose too. They stood by

the fireplace, and a bright flame shot up and showed them each other's faces as they stood together there by the hearth. Their eyes met—the dominant dark eyes and the fearless gray ones. Then,—

“I must go,” said Constance, and she trembled a little. “I mean—where have the Nepeans gone, I wonder? I think——”

“Aren't we late!” exclaimed the Misses Nepean, bursting into the room. “We had to count the offertory money and put out the lights.”

After supper Alice Nepean carried the lamp into the drawing-room, and left the gentlemen to smoke by candlelight. Later in the evening, following the custom of the house, the girls sang hymns in the little drawing-room until it was time to go to bed. It was the Vicar's happiest hour in all the week. With his son sitting beside him, his big hand laid with a half caress on his father's knee, the old man desired no other and no fuller joy. He looked at his children with new interest during this peaceful evening hour, ever tracing in them some new likeness to their dear mother, and dreading the time—impossible as he

thought to be averted—when some fellow would take any one of the dear girls from him. That, so far, there had been no cause for apprehension in this respect, did not in any measure console him, but only made him value his Sunday evenings all the more. Tottie, the eldest daughter, played the accompaniments to the hymns with a pretty touch, and a large number of wrong notes; and Flora sang an aggressive second, and leaned over her sister occasionally to strike the key-board with a rigid forefinger and “give herself the note.” The Vicar saw no defects in either performance. The fire glowed on the tiled hearth, the warm curtains shut out the raw autumn night, and the girls’ voices filled the room with pretty melody.

The evening was the first of the kind that Selah had ever spent. The little room with its pretty furnishings and bright fire, the old clergyman’s serene and peaceful face, and the feeling of home life pervading the whole scene, filled his heart all at once with an aching sense of loss—of disaster even.

Constance was standing beside him, the light

from the piano candles thrown upwards on to her face, her eyes bright and soft, and her red lips parted to sing. Her elbow rested lightly on the top of the cottage piano, and some brown chrysanthemums which she wore amongst the laces of her dress rose and fell with her gentle breathing.

He watched her dumbly—his own praises forgotten, and his heart seeming to beat in his throat. The love which he felt for her swept over him with a force which made him catch his breath. He had not known before that women like Constance Temple existed. Formerly, when he used to read denunciatory passages of Scripture prophesying woes to the rich, he had always considered that the passages applied to such people as (God forgive him !) beautiful women like Constance Temple, who lived in great houses, and whose garments were of silk, and their ornaments pearls. And now he had met one of the woeful rich, and she seemed to him without fault—a perfect creation to whom no condemnation applied. He could only look at her—look at her with wonder and a new light dawning in his eyes.

Richard Nepean saw the look, and the hand which he had laid caressingly on his father's knee trembled for a moment, and then resumed its caressing touch again.

Something of the burden of life seemed to roll away from Selah Harrison this evening. Always the sense of loss! but with it the vision, unattainable but dazzling and beautiful, of love and the perfecting of life.

The ugliness of existence, its sordidness, and its crime had no part in this peaceful domestic scene. He had no idea how the time went. When the evening, by tacit consent, seemed to be considered at an end, he said sharply, "No, no, not yet," and was barely conscious that he had spoken aloud.

He heard Richard Nepean say that he was going to see Constance home, and she had shaken hands with him and said good-night before he had recovered from his bewilderment.

Alice Nepean blew out the candles, and Selah took his leave, pulling himself together to thank the Vicar, with that courtesy which is old-fashioned now, for his hospitality.

He could not return to the oast. He walked

for mile on mile that night in the heavy-falling rain—not thinking consecutively, not looking forward, not glancing back, but overflowing with a wonderful new experience, and stupefied by the force of his love.

When he turned in at last dawn was breaking, and the stoker was preparing the fires for Monday's roasting.

He looked at Selah curiously for some moments, then shook his head,—

“He caān't 'a been drinking, for he waālks steady. But there's summat middlin' wrong wi' Mr. Awrisson.”

CHAPTER IX.

THERE is a sad story told to this day in Kent about some hop-pickers who were drowned when the river was in flood. There is a monument in a quiet Kentish churchyard visited every year by gipsy people. Stranger folk all of them—they who lie, with their troubles forgotten, beneath this stone; difficult to identify when laid out in the barns—difficult to name, even when they were identified, except by their nicknames of the streets. But we cannot pass their graves without a great pity filling our hearts. For they died, these strangers, when they were young and strong, and when life, in spite of all its hardships, seemed good to live. And some were beautiful amongst those who died, and that is most pitiful of all.

The story is too well known to need much telling.

The hop-pickers were being moved from the

wet, low-lying gardens where they had been picking to some higher ground and drier soil. The unusual rains of the past week had flooded the river, and even covered the old wooden bridge which would have to be crossed to reach the higher ground. A wagon, therefore, was sent to convey the people across. The horses in it were harnessed tandem-fashion, and the poor hop-pickers, who enjoy nothing so much as "a ride," filled the huge conveyance amid much shouting and glee. The children carried trails of autumn berries, and waved handkerchiefs and sang. The girls and men had caught up the words of some popular street melody, and sent the sound of it far over the quiet roads and fields. The wagoner cracked his whip and rode forward on the leading horse, and some of the hop-pickers raised a hurrah.

None of them remembered the revolt of a few nights back. Grudges are as soon forgotten as are benefits by these feckless, uncontrolled, thriftless folk. They were as happy and as easy-going in this morning's sunshine as they had been dangerous in the wet and storm of a few nights ago. Their leader had died suddenly in Maidstone

jail of inflammation of the lungs, contracted on the night of the riot; some more were still locked up—but they had been locked up before! and the missus must make shift somehow till they were released again. The gipsies do not forget; but the Cockneys and the Irish live in the present, and are as careless of the future as they are oblivious of the past. A few glasses of whisky would doubtless have sufficed to fire them again; but for the time being they were as full of irresponsible jollity as children out for a holiday.

They laughed at the deep-flowing river, and some of the children tossed their branches of berries into its sullen flood, and watched them swirl and float away on the racing waters.

Some of the women said, "Take care!" and held their children closer, for the flood looked very near the boards of the old bridge; and some frightened lassie cried, "Oh my!" and clutched at the sleeve of the lad who sat next her.

But the bridge was almost crossed, and the lads said, "Sit tight, Molly, and Nora, and Liza."

The bridge was almost crossed.

But the big wheeler shied at the nearness of

the swirling water, and the wagon swerved against the posts of the old bridge. It all happened in a moment—the snapping of the shafts of the wagon, and the breaking of the timber-posts of the old bridge. The wagon turned completely over, and some forty men, women, and children were struggling in the water.

Tom told his sister about it, with the tears running down his cheeks.

“I only got down there when it was all over, and they were laying out the bodies in the barns. About thirty are drowned, and only ten are saved.”

Constance’s lips were dry, and her face was ghastly white.

“Tom,” she panted—“Tom, was Mr. Harrison there?”

“Yes,” said Tom; “he’s hurt, I believe.”

“Not drowned?”

“No, no; he wasn’t in the wagon. He saved some of the people. Oh! I wish I’d been there.”

“Is he much hurt? How was he hurt? What happened? You tell things so slowly, Tom.”

“Well, I wasn’t there to see how it happened. Just see if the dog-cart is round yet, will you,

Constance? I've only just come up for blankets and brandy and things."

"Tell me *something*," the girl pleaded. She held her brother by the sleeve of his coat, and her drawn white face arrested his attention.

He put his arm round her waist, and said, "Don't look like that; perhaps I may be able to bring better news when I come up again. They *thought* that thirty must have been drowned; but everything was in confusion. They were carrying some girls into the barn. They looked so beautiful when they were dead," said the boy, who had never before looked on death, with a sob.

"You said Mr. Harrison saved some?"

"Yes, a woman and a child. Then he went into the river again, when he was nearly exhausted (so a man who was there told me), and he couldn't fight against the current. He was carried against the stump of a tree and got his head hurt."

"He may be dead!" said the girl, and her eyes were big with fear, and her hands locked themselves together.

"No; I'm sure he isn't. I should have heard of it. Ah, there's the cart!"

Constance watched him start. She sat still with clasped hands and eyes all wide with fear. Then she rose and said, with the simple decision of one who sees no alternative, "I must go to him."

When she had bidden him good-bye last Sunday at the vicarage, she had said to herself resolutely, "I shall not see him again." She had said, "I will forget"—had told herself that this man's courage, his simplicity, and his goodness had won her admiration; that his vivid personality had interested her; nay, even, she admitted, that only since she had known him had she realized how selfless and how noble a man's life may be. Quite unconsciously she had until now accepted the tenets of her class, believing in all simplicity that to be noble meant to belong to an old race, and to fulfil the obligations of one's birth. Selah Harrison had shown her something different, and she had indulged in a little hero-worship; yes, and he had taught her something—she hardly knew what. But there the matter ended—must end.

To-day she put aside all her elaborate arguments, and said only, "I must go to him."

She walked quickly down the avenue, under the trees reddening in the bright autumn sunshine, and then she saw Selah Harrison coming towards her, and she stopped and sat down trembling on a seat near the gate.

"They have told you about it?" he said.

"You are not hurt?" said Constance.

"No; only stunned for a time."

"Were you coming to tell me about the accident?"

"Yes. I fear they have not told you very gently." For he saw the girl's white face, and the sweet, trembling, pale lips. He sat down beside her on the garden seat.

"It is so awful," said Constance; "and I feared—I feared—Ah!"—— She broke down into bitter weeping. "They were so young to die," she finished lamely.

"And so thoughtless," he said, his voice full of trouble. "God forgive them, and take them to Himself!"

"Have they another chance?" whispered the girl, raising anxious eyes to his.

"They are in their Father's hands, that is all I know," he said.

"To me," said Constance, "death is very awful—it frightens me." She shuddered, and laid her hand on his sleeve, as though seeking protection.

"Poor child!" he said, and for just one moment he took the two cold, trembling hands in his—then released them with a gesture of infinite renunciation.

"I am not frightened now," said Constance, although her face had grown many shades paler.

He offered her his arm, and they rose without speaking and walked up the long avenue together.

Horse-chestnuts, blown down by the recent storms, were lying split open on the broad walk, their brown, shining kernels showing in a bed of silky white and a husk of green. The leaves on the trees were just touched with early autumn red, and the sun was rejoicing to run his course in a sky of royal blue. Far away over the Weald, where the rising ground which they call a hill touches the horizon, long shafts of light on the sky seemed to flash and die again. And Kentish folk will tell you how this is the reflection of the sea waves,

flashing and dimpling on the Sussex coast. Let those believe it who will. Nearer at hand, the woods and fields seemed to sparkle after the rain; and the wonderful aliveness of the country, which the bustle and turmoil of cities can never give to dead walls, glowed through every field and hedge-row and rain-washed blade of grass. There was a hum of life in the air, a song of life—happy, abounding life—in the gently stirring wind. This was a day on which all nature clapped her hands, and the little hills rejoiced. The sound of some sportsmen's guns in the distance seemed to declare that it was silent here in the long avenue, where the birds and insects lived unscared. But it was a plenteous silence, and the broad Weald echoed it and smiled again.

The silence of the man and the girl was fuller than the living silence of the woods and fields.

In the village church the bell began to toll solemnly, jarring in the sunlight, and echoing in sullen notes over the happy fields. Down below, in the wide barns close by the river, thirty men and women and some little children lay in decent white coverings, their hands crossed upon their

breasts. And up here in the stately avenue, with the sunshine looking down on them, a man and woman, both fair to look upon, walked together, and were silent.

When they reached the hall door, Constance withdrew the hand that had lain on Selah's arm and placed it in his.

"You will come to-morrow?" she said.

"Yes."

"Good-bye."

And this was the manner of the parting of their two lives, although they did not know it.

For on the morrow, when they met, it was a different Selah Harrison, and Constance knew it. But it was the same Constance, and this fact was not plain to the other. For a man never knows—he reasons. A woman knows.

"I have come to ask you for some flowers for the dead," he said.

The bitterness of death seemed to have passed over his own face. It was gray-white and drawn, and his eyes were dim and colourless.

"I am making some wreaths for them," said Constance, "and will bring them down in the afternoon."

She spoke low, because of the pain at her heart.

"Thank you. Shall I call for them, or will you send them?"

"I shall send them," she said slowly.

It was so cruel! Had she not also had a night of struggle? Did he think he suffered alone? The night had been so long and dark, and the foe had been so strong. All that had, before, made her life, had risen up and condemned her. Family affection; the opinions of her friends; conventionality; fitness; the pride of an old race. But love is stronger than all these, or else it is not love. And after a night of struggle, joy and the triumph of love came in the morning.

It is worthy perhaps of note, and goes somewhat towards proving the superior strength of that which is highest in us over that which is inferior, that in the case of this man and this woman, the best that they knew prevailed over every lesser consideration.

To the girl of twenty, the highest revelation of existence was love. And, indeed, hers was an affection not of the baser sort. The triumph of

love seemed to her to complete the measure of her being. Life was love, and love was life. In its train followed duty—perhaps self-sacrifice—certainly an added nobleness of character. Yet love was of itself, and for itself. Not a means of ennoblement, nor an incentive to duty, nor an avenue for self-sacrifice. But complete in itself—the beginning of things, and the end of them; the end also, and the beginning.

The man of nearly thirty loved with a fierceness and intensity perhaps impossible for a woman to gauge. (The love of a woman is faithful and suffering, not fierce.) Selah Harrison had striven and been tempted. He had almost always, since he was a boy, been unhappy. He was an enthusiast and an egoist. His beliefs were Bible beliefs, taught him in the stern school of the Puritans. He had known doubts, yet always his faith was strong enough to maintain that “he who believeth not shall be damned.” He had promised to serve God, yet had, he thought, frequently failed to do so. And withal he believed that whoso putteth his hand to the plough and turneth back is not fit for the kingdom of God. He accepted literally

the statement (God knows whether or not he was right) that few are chosen. And while acknowledging the doctrine of predestination, he wrestled in agony for the conversion of sinners. Daily he agonized in prayer for some lost soul, battling with his belief in the efficacy of prayer and his conviction of the irresistible justice of the avenging God. Of his own soul he was able to say, "Let me be condemned if but these may be saved." He believed fervently that the damnation of many might lie at his door, did he ever fail in watchfulness or in exhortation. He never spared himself. A whole night of prayer for some sinner steeped in crime seemed to him a reasonable service. And if thus a soul may be saved from hell, surely it is but a little thing to do. He believed in the God of pity; but it was pitifulness for distress and sufferings—not for sins. That he himself might deserve pity did not even remotely suggest itself to him. He had not been brought up to know tenderness towards himself. It is doubtful whether he ever remembered receiving a caress.

And underneath all this, never guessed at before, but passionately revealed to him last night, was

the great human need of happiness—the aching desire for love and joy.

“Christ! Christ!” he had cried out in the unresponsive darkness, and the sweat drops stood on his brow, “let me not deny Thee. Help me, Lord! Help me; for I am sore smitten! Thou hast given me a few sheep in the wilds to bring to Thee. Let me not in any wise betray my trust. Help me to give up—to deny myself and follow Thee. I have given Thee my life, and I cannot take it from Thee again. O my God, I dare not fail! Keep my hand to the plough. Give me strength! give me strength! Thou knowest how my heart entreats me. Thou knowest how she is more to me than life—much more. I cannot give her up! This cup which Thou hast given is too bitter for me to drink. Let it pass.”

Then, passing from those Biblical phrases most suitable to prayer, he slipped into the babbling, irrational talk of any other young lover, and just cried out, over and over again, “I love her so—I love her so.”

He bowed his head upon his hands, and for a moment it seemed as though, not his own sufferings

only, but something of the desperate, universal world-anguish crushed with a great weight of grief upon his heart. The hideousness of sufferings, its relentlessness and its heedlessness were revealed to him, and his soul shrank back from the sight.

A certain blankness of spirit, which comes after intense beseeching, benumbed him, so that he could not even cry out against the anguish. He flung himself on his coarse bed, and a great darkness closed round him, in which he neither spoke nor moved.

About the dawning, it seemed to him—for he was ever a dreamer of dreams, a seer of visions (as Joseph, St. Paul, and St. John, who wrote the Book of Revelation, and North-country people also have been)—it seemed to him that God laid His hand upon his shoulder and said; “My son, *I am here.*”

And Selah’s soul thrilled to the surprise of his possession—the stupendous discovery of the nearness and actuality of God. He trembled, but not with fear; and his white face, turned heavenwards, was transfigured as though a light not of earth shone upon it.

Suffering seemed but a small thing now, and life itself appeared as but of little count, except that it was lived nobly. The vision of God and of goodness blinded him by its beauty. The meaning of existence became apparent to him, and the revelation was all-sufficient. Christ was the end of all things, as He was the beginning of them—the meaning of life, nay, life itself, was Christ.

CHAPTER X.

So his face wore a new light upon it when he went to ask Constance Temple for flowers; but it was not the same light that glowed there yesterday. And Constance knew it.

What had happened? Had he never cared for her? No, no! Yesterday, when he took her hands in his; yesterday, when she walked with him in the plenteous silence; yesterday, when he said good-bye, he had loved her. What had happened? The girl shivered as she sat in the warm greenhouse, making wreaths, and her lips grew white. All day she twined fragrant flowers for the dead strangers who were lying still and quiet by the sullen river. And all her life afterwards, the smell of these flowers brought with them to Constance the burden of regret.

Lady Temple, in her round of gentle exercise through the fragrant conservatories, and the cooler houses where the tall chrysanthemums

stood in phalanxes, white and purple and yellow, stopped and laid her hand kindly on her daughter's shoulder.

"Don't sit and think about this awful accident, dear. My own nerves are quite unstrung, and seeing you look so white, makes me worse."

"I am so sorry, mamma."

"You were always a dutiful child, Constance," said her mother, caressing the girl's pretty hair as she stooped over the work. "But, indeed, I don't like to see you taking this thing so much to heart."

"In a little while I shall try to forget," said Constance; "but not yet—not yet!"

"Are you going to take these flowers down to the place yourself?" Lady Temple asked presently.

"Do you mind if I do?" asked Constance quickly. "Papa thought I ought not to go."

"Not yesterday, dear, when it was all so dreadful. But if you like to drive down this afternoon and take your wreaths, I am sure the people will be pleased. And you need not see anything."

"The wreaths are finished now," said Constance, rolling up the ball of wire she had been using, and shaking some fragments of leaves and stalks from her dress.

"Shall I go?" she said, and hesitated by the door.

"My dear, you have just said you would go," said her mother, amazed at this indecision, so foreign to the girl's nature.

"Yes, yes; I know," said Constance quickly. "But—— Please give me a minute. Yes, I will go. May I order the victoria, mamma?"

* * * * *

Selah knew she would come. The conviction was not the outcome of vanity. He called it a revelation. Others would, perhaps, name it a brain-wave, or they would wax eloquent on the subject of telepathic impact. Selah only knew that she would come, and thought that God had shown the matter to him. He prepared himself by prayer for the meeting, and waited by the barn, feeling strong.

Now it is a fact—let me say, lest I be overbold, to me it appears a fact—that we can bear

anything for which we are prepared if it happens in exactly the way and in the degree that we anticipate. Pain is bearable if we can exactly gauge beforehand its severity and the manner of its coming. How else, indeed, do we hear a woman say, with set lips and Christ-like patience, as she goes again down into some dark valley of the shadow of pain, "I shall be better able to bear it this time—I know what it is." Or a weeping mourner say of his lost darling, "I had known for years what to expect. It all happened as the doctors had foretold. I was prepared, and the blow has not killed me."

It is when a thing happens, as it more often does, contrary rather than according to our expectations, that we feel so absolutely defenceless, so horribly out of our reckoning; so bewildered by our miscalculations. All the forces that we had summoned to meet the impending casualty have to be re-formed, reorganized in a hurry. They cannot find their places, and the citadel is carried by a surprise.

Selah Harrison had been preparing himself all day for seeing Constance come across the

fields, with her free, light step, and clad in her autumn gown of russet brown, with scarlet poppies in her hat. He waited for her, ready to withstand this vision of loveliness, and prepared to look at her without flinching; prepared even to take her hand, when she held it out to him, without allowing his own to tremble.

For an hour he waited for the first glimpse of the poppied hat, and told himself that he was calm and strong.

But, lo! what happened? While he looked across the fields, a carriage drove down the road and drew up where he was standing. A luxurious, big carriage, with glittering dark wheels and huge springs, drawn by a pair of dashing bays, and with two superb-looking servants seated on the box.

In this fine carriage, Constance, dressed all in black—black that had been Court-mourning once; the only sombre clothing the girl had. Heavy, rich black, with glistening jet and cloudy gauze trimming it, and a big black hat with drooping feathers. A regal Constance, with a pale face, and lips that trembled. And all about her, on

her lap, and on the floor and seats of the carriage, wreaths and crosses of heavy-scented, rare white flowers.

He held his breath. Constance in the crisp pink cotton dress she used to love to wear, and the big nodding roses garlanding her hat! Constance all in brown autumn colours swinging over the fields! Constance laughing with the children at the Union. Constance with the yellow chrysanthemums twisted in her hair! Constance with the red, ripe lips and the happy eyes! But not this Constance, whom he had never seen before, and for whose advent he was therefore so pitifully unprepared. Not this pale, sad-faced, beautiful Constance, with the black draperies falling about her, and the dim, sad eyes.

He went forward like a man in a dream.

"You have come," he said stupidly; and again, with a sound almost of fear in his voice, "You have come."

The gipsies were waiting by the river. Tribes of them from every part of the country had assembled to mourn their friends. All day, since early morning, their wailing had continued dolor-

ously, accompanied by wringing of hands and the wake-songs of the Irish. The sound had a weird effect in the quiet Kentish village. The country people stood far off watching the strange scene, and children clung to their mothers as the wild cries of grief rose in the air.

"Yes, I have come," said Constance, and she dropped her hands at her sides with a touch of abandonment and appeal. She had stepped out of the carriage, and the footman was lifting out some of the white wreaths.

"Carry them over to the barns, please," said Constance. She herself took a white cross in her hand, and Selah gathered up two wreaths and followed her.

The gipsies ceased their wailings, and some of them pressed close to her, and began to bless her for her thought for their dead.

"I am so sorry for you," said the girl gently. "Will you lay this cross on some one whom you were fond of amongst those who are dead?—and this?—and this?" She took the wreaths from Selah and the footman, and distributed them to the gipsies to lay upon the strangers in the barn.

"Sure, ye'll come in and see the beautiful carpses av thim?" said an Irishwoman, picturesquely dirty, and with a rich-coloured scarf about her head.

Constance turned to Selah.

"I will go if they wish it," she said.

She seemed to have put on a certain divine courage with her sable robes—a beautiful kindness and compassion. She was no longer the girl of yesterday, shrinking from pain and flinching at a rough word. To Selah she was something more than the fair, clean-minded girl whom he had ever striven to protect from even a suggestion of evil. She was a woman, calm-eyed and constant—a woman who, in some strange way, he knew had suffered. He wondered dimly how suffering could have touched Constance Temple. And he led her into the barn.

The girl never faltered. She laid the wreaths on the dead hop-pickers; and she put the white crosses on the women's breasts, "For," she said, "I think they suffer most."

Once she stooped down and smoothed a strand of black hair from the cold white forehead of a

beautiful gipsy girl; and she knelt for a moment by the little slender body of a child, and looked tenderly, yearningly at her.

"Is it little Amy?" she whispered to the man, who kept close to her all the time.

"Yes," he said, and added, "You gave her flowers once before."

"Ah!" she cried; "you have not forgotten that?"

"I have forgotten nothing."

Then, of a sudden, the girl broke down in bitter weeping. Sobs choked her voice, and the sweet gray eyes were all blurred with tears.

"Everything is so sad," she said; and the piteous words sounded doubly piteous from her fresh young voice.

He would have taken her in his arms then; would have kissed the hem of her clothing; would have cried out that he loved her better, far better than life. But he crushed down the madness in him. His cheeks were white, and his breath came short and quick, and he wrestled as those of old wrestled with wild beasts. Ah the pain of it—the cruel, conquering pain! This girl—this girl

who before all the world was beautiful and good and to be desired; this girl, so near him, and with the tear-drops dimming her eyes—who could resist her?

“My God! my God!” his soul cried out, “I am not able to bear it.”

There was a long silence. The dead lay peacefully round them—many of them with a strange, beautiful smile on their lips; all of them at peace for ever.

Selah Harrison looked at Constance dumbly. Twice he tried to speak, but his dry lips prevented it. His breath laboured through them painfully.

“So sad,” he said at last, hoarsely, and tried to say more.

“And oh,” cried Constance, flinging out her arms before her, “so *difficult* to understand!”

CHAPTER XI.

HOP-PICKING was over. The last of the Co'gates had been taken to the oasts. The Cockney girls had got their hats out of pawn, and were prepared to return to dear London, with its cheap tasty food and its comfortable gas-lights, in all the bravery of uncurled feathers and tawdry flowers.

The hop-pickers who had been drowned in the river's flood were decently buried: their tomb remaineth unto this day. The river flowed softly and sweetly now, as though it had done its worst and was satisfied. And the sun shone every day on the ripening berries in the hedges.

Soft, sleepy autumn weather, with the fragrance of the sleepy hops blown over the land and the smiling blue sky overhead. Dear, sleepy Kent was composing itself for its winter slumber with a delicious languor. The disturbing hop-pickers were gone, and this eminently respectable county was itself again.

At High Temple there was a large shooting-party, and the house was filled with guests, who drove and walked and did fancy-work, and rode pony-races, and talked scandal in the usual country-house fashion. Selah used to hear the guns going all day long; and once he had seen some of the party racing their ponies and flying over hurdles in a big meadow, and his heart went back to the time when he had followed the hounds on his rough little mare, or, later, to his wild days, when he had won the local steeplechase at Melbury and his mother had cried.

Those old days were over now, and the days in Kent would soon be over too. To-morrow he would return to London, and in November he was to sail for Taro, to begin his life-work there. He packed up his modest luggage and went for a walk.

The dust lay white in the lanes, as though it had been summer-time; but the robin's clear, sad song told that winter was near. Selah Harrison had learnt to love this pleasant, homely land of Kent, with its absurd air of always seeming to be the background to a pastoral play. He liked the soft

speech of the country people and their kindly greetings as they tramped home from work.

"It is a lovable place," he said to himself, leaning over a gate in the sunshine, and surveying the pleasant landscape and the red-roofed oast-houses, with their cowls white as a pigeon's wing against the blue.

Taro would probably look hot and arid after this, and black faces would appear strange in comparison with the fresh, fair countenances of these Kentish folk. But a strong man with work to do and something to forget does not whine over a bad climate nor dusky skins. Taro and hard work, danger, difficulties—these were all he longed for. To get quickly away there, and be at something that absorbed every thought to the exclusion of happy dreams—this was the only sort of peace he sought.

He swung his stick and walked on, striding away from High Temple down the hill to the level Weald. Halfway down he met Sir John Temple toiling upwards.

"I am so glad you have not left us yet," said the baronet, extending his hand with frank cordiality.

"I have been hoping for an opportunity of expressing my admiration for your courage in saving life the other day."

Then, seeing Harrison's genuine discomfort, and appreciating the fact that a brave man does not want compliments, he changed the subject quickly and said,—

"And I also wanted to ask you to give me some information about these Londoners who come down here for the hop-picking—these tramps, for instance. Will it be taking you out of your way to turn and walk with me? I expect my phaeton to overtake me presently to go into Maidstone. These tramps, for instance, who come here in such tribes in the autumn—how do they live for the rest of the year? Can they possibly come under the jurisdiction of this new Education Act? Is there——? Dear me, I am sorry to say this is my carriage! Will you kindly give me an opportunity of speaking to you again on this subject?"

"I leave by the early train to-morrow," said Harrison.

"And *I* shall not return till six o'clock this evening." Then, with the same charming trick of

impulsiveness which recalled Constance directly, Sir John exclaimed, "Dine with us this evening, can you? Lady Temple will be most happy if you will; and you will be conferring a favour upon me if you will allow yourself to be bored by all the questions I shall ask you."

A man living in an oast-house cannot plead home engagements, and Selah had none abroad. Sir John had seated himself in the phaeton before receiving a reply, while Selah was giving himself time to wonder if this invitation was "a sign" that God allowed him to say good-bye to the woman he loved before he went away.

"We dine at half-past seven," Sir John called back over his shoulder, as the groom sprang into his place, and he sent his horses forward.

Selah bowed his head and murmured, "It is of God."

After that a day of breathless waiting—a day of weakness and sheer yearning for the sight of a girl's face, the sound of a girl's voice and the touch of her hand.

When he reached the hall door at High Temple, his brows were drawn together in a frown like

those of a person in pain, and he bit his lips to try and still the beating of his heart.

The drawing-room was full when he entered. He had a confused vision of ladies in gleaming satin dresses, who talked a great deal, and waved fans, and seemed very full of animation; and an accompanying number of young men, all with long legs and smooth hair, and polished shirt-fronts that caught the light.

They were all talking so fast that no one heard Mr. Harrison's name when it was announced, and he had a miserable walk amongst satin couches and palms and cabinets, till he reached the inner room, where every one was assembled.

All at once he saw Constance, and his shyness fell from him like a mantle. Who could look at her divinely kind face and feel embarrassed or ill at ease!

She was standing by the fireplace—not talking so much as the other ladies present, but smiling in her reassuring, all-enveloping way at a very young man, who stammered as he spoke. The gleam of the firelight lit up her white satin dress with rosy lights, and touched a jewel at her throat till it

flashed and winked again. There were violets in her hair, and violets lay in a big cluster amongst the filmy laces on her bodice. Her graceful dark head was bent slightly forward to catch what the stammering boy was saying. Her foot in its white satin slipper rested lightly on the steel bar of the fender.

A woman to worship! And Selah Harrison, the yeoman's son—the sad-souled, the self-mistrusting, humble man—exulted like any other young lover in his mistress's peerless beauty.

She felt his glance and turned round, then drew her mother's attention to the unnoticed guest. Everything she did had a unique grace. Her manner of recalling Lady Temple's attention, her little air of courteous diffidence as she advanced just behind her mother to greet him, her gentle way of finding him an unobtrusive seat—all the little acts of graciousness so natural to her set her apart from anything that he had heretofore known.

Lady Temple began to talk to him about the hop-pickers. Why is it that so many kindly-intentioned people insist on starting our special topic as soon as they begin to speak to us? The

effect is always pathetically flat. No one can dance to such laboured piping, and the unfortunate performer, realizing painfully what great things are expected of him, becomes momentarily paralyzed, and is invariably considered at best "disappointing."

Lady Temple did her utmost to draw out her guest, and gave him every opportunity of distinguishing himself—with the most barren results. She reeled off a few conventional phrases about the inhabitants of East London; deplored the state of the poor; gave him an opening on the subject of the "Romish tendencies of the present day," but altogether failed to provoke even the mildest burst of enthusiasm from her monosyllabic guest.

Lady Temple was disappointed. Her husband had said that Mr. Harrison was a most singular man, and the Vicar had dubbed him a fanatic. Now, Lady Temple, Herod-like, dearly loved a new sensation (especially, as she herself would have said, in this deadly neighbourhood), and she hoped to have seen, if not some miracle done, at least some unusual behaviour on the part of her guest.

She resented his commonplace replies to her questions, and gave him a little niece, with an impertinent nose and a wonderful scarlet dress, to take in to dinner.

Poor little Nessie! she was in love with a blue-eyed soldier-cousin on the other side of the table, and she thought it too unkind of her aunt to send her in to dinner with this dull, horrid, silent, stupid clergyman. She made a little *move* and blinked her pretty eyes at the soldier-cousin as they sat down; and she told him afterwards that "she had been so bored at dinner that she had very nearly cried—wasn't he sorry?" To which the cousin, being a soldier and fluent of tongue, replied in suitable terms.

"Will you say grace, Mr. Harrison?" said Lady Temple. It was part of her orthodoxy to request any clergyman present to ask a blessing on her excellent dinners. Always she did so with an air of extreme devoutness, and closed her eyes above her immaculate dinner-napkin with a piety that bespoke the true Churchwoman.

Sir John had begun his usual rapid "F'wat-reboutreceive," when he saw Harrison, with folded

hands, bend over the table, and heard him in slow, earnest tones begin to pray for "a blessing on these Thy mercies, and on all in this house," and to make a petition "for those who are in want," and to give an earnest recommendation to the Most High to provide for them in their necessity.

The butler cleared his throat twice before the grace was finished, and Nessie had with difficulty repressed a nervous giggle. Lady Temple gave her sanction to the benediction by a devout "Amen," and looked severely at her niece.

Conversation was resumed with difficulty on the appearance of soup, and the footmen's sonorous "Thick or clear, sir," was heard distinctly for some moments after her ladyship's "Amen" had been spoken.

Perhaps it was to counterbalance the unusual lack of festivity which distinguished dinner that caused some turbulent spirit to suggest a dance in the hall when that meal was over.

"Do, do let us dance!" cried a chorus of girls, clustering round Lady Temple, some of them sinking down on their knees, and clasping their hands with pretty girlish affection and entreaty.

“Why not?” said Lady Temple good-naturedly—
“that is, if we can get our local musicians at such short notice.”

The village schoolmistress, who played the piano in the arpeggio style, a musical under-gardener who performed on the cornet, and a crippled lad whose touch on the violin was of unusual sweetness, were summoned in hot haste. The hall was soon cleared of furniture, and its dark oak floors and panelled walls made a charming setting to the girls' light dresses, reminding one of a pleasing picture in a *Graphic* Christmas Number. The vivacious young ladies who had been talking and laughing before dinner talked and laughed with renewed vigour. They were impatient to begin; and Nessie, in her little daring way, put her fingers into her mouth and whistled on them to summon the gentlemen from the dining-room, remarking, when reproved, that she did so to shock that horribly depressing person who had taken her in to dinner.

“These young people must not deprive us of our talk, Mr. Harrison,” said Sir John Temple. (People had a way of talking to Selah as though he were

an old man.) He led the way, smiling, to his own den, and discussed East London for two mortal hours.

Two mortal hours of East London, while the feet of the young and the joyous skimmed the hall's shining dark floor, while light laughter lifted itself above the sound of the music, and girls' eyes were shining and men's faces grew tender. And while Constance was smiling and dancing!

It was past eleven o'clock when at last Sir John threw away the end of his cigar and suggested that they should "go and see what the young people were about."

Selah Harrison, walking strangely on the polished floor, followed his host into the hall. It was a pretty scene, and its ridiculous likeness to the typical Christmas Number picture gave one the curious feeling of seeming to look at a panorama. Hundreds of candles gleamed from sconces on the walls. "We must have a blaze of light," Nessie had said in her emphatic fashion.

Nessie's bright-red dress was here, there, and everywhere. She was an untirable dancer, and her little red shoes "peeped in and out" from beneath

her skirt in lightest pirouettes and hops. Her frizzy dark hair was blown into little curls about her forehead, and her impertinent little flower-face wore its most impertinent and its most fascinating smiles.

The soldier-cousin had succumbed to her charms at a very early stage of the evening, and now Nessie was telling him, with her softest, sweetest look, that she had never been in love in her life, and did not think she ever would be!

It is believed that this remark gave the soldier-cousin the opportunity he sought. Lady Temple remembers that it was soon after this that Nessie disappeared from the hall, and was only discovered, when it was time to go to bed, sitting in the cold outer hall with her cousin's greatcoat on. Her aunt spoke seriously to her for half an hour the next day, and Nessie said she thought that engaged people were always allowed to do that sort of thing.

Lady Temple, in gray satin, was not dancing. She moved about the beautiful old hall in a graceful way, saying a few words here and there, and tapping her young guests with her fan in what,

in Grace Aguilar's day, used to be called a sportive manner.

"There isn't a woman in the room to be compared with her," said a white-haired admiral, to whose eyes Elizabeth Temple would never appear old. And he made this remark twice over, although his excellent lady was in the room, and one of his boys was dancing with Constance.

Constance, with the scented violets in her hair and the gleam of jewels at her throat, was dancing with light feet, her flowing satin dress swinging round her, and the soft light of many candles turning her brown hair to gold. Some of the girls had drawn on gloves for dancing, but Constance's long arms and cool white hands were bare.

The music stopped, and she swung lightly from her partner's encircling arm, and stood beside him waving her white fan slowly to and fro. Her eyes were soft to-night—soft like a dove's eyes, and bright as though two little lamps burned behind them. On her fair cheeks two spots of bright carnation colour burned and glowed. Her eyes wandered ever towards the study door.

The heavy *portières* lifted. Harrison and her father came into the room. Then the sweet carnation colour flooded all Constance's face, and retreated in a wave, leaving her very white. The big fan dropped to her side—she trembled a little; and her partner said, "Are you cold?"

The music struck up again. The candles seemed to flash together in an indistinct blur. The dancers floated round—not separately, but in a confused mass. The music sounded deafening and wild. Some one was speaking to Constance. He was saying that this dance was his.

To-morrow Selah Harrison would be gone.

"Not this one!" she said entreatingly.

To-morrow he would be gone.

There was a movement where he was standing. Perhaps he was going now.

No, no, no—not yet, not quite yet!

She crossed the room hastily. Sir John had gone back to the study. Harrison was standing by some palms alone.

She came and stood before him—tall and graceful as a lily. She held out her hands to him.

("Such pretty hands! such pretty hands!")

They were the words Selah Harrison murmured when he was dying.)

"Will you dance with me?" she said.

She was so beautiful as she stood before him—her dear face all colourless, and the long white arms outstretched. She was so beautiful, and he loved her so, that he could have cried aloud for the struggle that was tearing him.

He shook his head. His voice broke, and he muttered hoarsely that he did not dance.

"Not even with me?" said Constance.

"Not even with you," he said. And something gave way with a snap at his heart.

* * * * *

He went out into the garden amongst the dewy flowers. Long shafts of light gleamed from the window on to the late roses and the tall dahlias in the flower-beds. The grass underneath his feet was damp and cold.

He went and sat down heavily on a garden bench.

Night, with its thousand secrets, was whispering about him. The trees overhead flung out long branches, as a tired sleeper will fling out

his arms, and sighed eerily in the darkness. One o'clock sounded from the church tower, and the saddest hour of the night began—the hour when our Saviour asked two disciples to stay near Him as He prayed—the dolorous, weird hour when Fear stalks abroad and sick people die.

The universal darkness round him seemed part of his life. For him the sun would not shine again, but neither would any great struggle again come to him. He had passed the supreme moment of his existence. And he had conquered, but victory was not sweet.

Ah! the tired hour after the battle, when we weigh loss against victory, sacrifice against attainment, and the bitter question, "Was it worth while?" nags at us with such pitiless importunity. Is there a more hopeless hour in all our lives?

We all know the hour, those of us who have struggled at all, when our very souls are sick with fighting, and conquest seems so much sadder than defeat, because we have been fighting a battle which we long *not* to win.

To Selah Harrison, sitting immovable like a black shadow in the dim garden, the hour was

one on which no ray of light gleamed. He did not think consciously of himself. He felt like a dead man. Something was over, and the next thing had not begun to happen yet. Shall we have such a waiting time between this life and the next?

He hardly knew why he sat on in the garden. But while the music sounded from the house he could not get away. Some one had thrown open a window, letting out a brighter shaft of light and a louder strain of music. The village band was playing a sickly-sweet valse of years ago, and the thin, simple air had the curious sadness in it which every one has noticed in dance music.

The gentle tinkling of the schoolmistress's accompaniment and the cornet's clear note mingled prettily together. But the violin sounded distinct and separately, like a boy's beautiful voice in an indifferent choir. It spoke alone in a language of its own, and always its sighing seemed to tell the story of an everlastingly lonely life.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

IN a grim northern city there is an unfashionable locality called Nicholson Street, S.S. S.S. stands for South Side, and indicates that Nicholson Street lies on the south side of the river Clyde. It is not picturesque, except at night, when the flare of the iron foundries lights up the sky and the dark water, and the interior of many a humble kitchen and attic room. It is not famous in any way; but one woman in the world always used to look back to it as heaven, and one woman's heart used to yearn for it through many years in a distant land.

The woman was Janet M'Call, only daughter of Jasper M'Call, master of the Normal School. At the time we make her acquaintance Janet was thirty-four years of age, and unwed. She was a fair woman, with yellow hair greased and brushed so smoothly that it looked green on the temples,

and only caught gleams of gold on the stiff, tight plaits behind. Janet was plain-looking, as her mother and her candid Scotch friends had often told her; but children loved her, and people sent for her when they were ill. Her eyes were a homely gray-green; her large white teeth were with difficulty covered by her lips; and her cheeks were pink, with red veins running over them—"tartan cheeks," the children used to call them.

For they all had their joke on Janet, because she was an old maid. In Janet's world the term still bore its old-fashioned sting of reproach. No one of her acquaintance had ever been known to be an old maid who could possibly become a wife, so the name was synonymous with failure, and conveyed also a suggestion of unattractiveness.

Janet admitted both the failure and the unattractiveness, when Lizzie Thomson, safe in the possession of a husband, used to ask her "when her turn was coming." But she held to it resolutely that she had done her best. Janet's best consisted in singing in the choir, dressing neatly, and making excellent shortbread when any one was coming to tea. So far, however, these solid

virtues had not met with the reward that they deserved. Janet had never walked out with any one in her life. At the choir *soirée* she had a few pleasant words from the minister, a hand-shake from the assistant, the precentor, and every member of the choir; but in spite of pathetic imaginings on the subject, and daily longings that the hand-shake might lead to some dearer salutation, Janet's truthful mind was fain to admit that this was not love.

The thought of love and marriage was never out of Janet's mind. She had done everything, short of having her fortune told (which thing was witchcraft and a sin), to try and find out, by occult methods, when these so greatly-desired blessings would come her way. When she pulled a "merry-thought" with any one, her "wish" was "that I may be married before the year is out." At Halloween she watched with feverish anxiety the nuts on the hob, to see if her young man was going to prove true to her or the reverse. She had cut apples before her looking-glass at twelve o'clock at night; had addressed the new moon (in a whisper); had eaten cake till she choked, to

get the ring; had sought in mottoes out of crackers; had even opened the Bible (with prayer) to see when, if ever, she was going to be married. But in spite of some hopeful verses from the Old Testament, and two most striking and convincing mottoes, Janet's fate in the shape of a young man delayed its coming.

Every one knew that Janet wanted to marry, because it is an understood thing in Nicholson Street, S.S., that every one must want to marry. It was, nevertheless, considered hopeless to expect to get a husband at the advanced age of thirty-four. In Nicholson Street early marriages are the fashion. A woman is an old maid at five-and-twenty.

Janet herself despaired now of ever attaining to matrimony, and wondered if her hopelessness showed a want of faith in God's providence. She decided that, "maybe if I got him, he'd no be good tae me;" and though in her inmost heart she had doubts as to whether or not a bad husband was not better than no husband at all, it soothed her conscience to dwell upon this possible fulfilment of her prayer. But the children! Janet had never told any one that love of children was the

passion of her life. She tried to disguise it from the children of the Normal School; but needless to say, they found out her weakness and traded upon it. It was always she who had peppermints or a taste of shortbread for the lassie who had had the tawse, and tears always rained down little faces all the faster when she was near with her unfailing remedies.

Mrs. Jasper M'Call (administrator-in-chief of the tawse) thought Janet was "soft" where children were concerned; but even she never suspected the depths of tenderness in Janet's heart towards the bairns. (We Scotch people keep our feelings to ourselves—we don't quite know why.) Had Janet expressed fondness for children, her friends would have hinted that "it was time she had some of her own." So Janet never told any one of the thrill that went through her when a wee pair of soft arms were flung round her neck, and only she herself knew what caught at her heart when she looked into a baby's round blue eyes.

On the occasion of the half-yearly *soirée* (pronounced *sorree*) the minister had a new joke with Janet.

"Here's a chance for you young ladies, Miss McCall!" he said jocosely. "A missionary from Taro has come home to get a wife."

"Is he here to-night?" said Janet, who was nothing if not business-like.

"Yes, he's here," said the minister; "and a fine set-up man too, though quiet and not very sociable."

"I'd like to see him," said Janet.

"I'll soon effect an introduction," said Mr. Mains, still in a jocose manner.

Janet detained him for a moment, with the caution that was her national birthright.

"What way does he want a wife?" she asked.

"He has started female schools," replied the minister, "and it has been represented to him that there must be a Christian lady at the head of them."

"I'll feel obliged if you'll introjooce him," said Janet.

The minister did so, and Selah Harrison made his bow.

Fifteen years have passed since we last saw him. His thick hair is turning gray, and although

he is not long past forty, he wears a venerable-looking beard. His eyes are brighter than they used to be—they seem to glow under the heavy brows; and his face wears the far-off look of mysticism which comes to those who live much alone.

The history of the past fifteen years had left its indelible impress upon him. His was a tired face, but a beautiful one, touched with its far-off mystic look. The story of all that had happened to him is not soon told; but a sketch of it must suffice, for perhaps it will not greatly interest all readers.

Selah Harrison left England the November after he said good-bye to Constance Temple. He never saw her again. When the ship that took him to Sydney was slipping down the river, past gray Gravesend and foggy Sheppey Island, he found a small packet in his cabin, addressed in writing not known to him. The packet contained a painting in miniature of Constance Temple's lovely face. Selah looked at it through blinding tears. Once he rushed on deck and said to the captain, "Would it be possible for you to put me ashore

with the pilot?" But he knew all the time he was not going to turn back. He slung the miniature on a slender gold watch-chain that his mother had given him, and clasped it round his neck. It was Constance's son that undid the clasp for the first time the day that Selah died.

His work among the savages of Taro was fraught with daily, almost hourly, peril. He had gone amongst them with his life in his hand, hardly concerned that he might at any moment have to lay it down. During the first years of his sojourn there, cannibalism in its worst and most awful forms was daily practised on the island; widow-strangling and human sacrifices were matters of course. Wars and feuds between tribes never ceased, and were conducted in a manner far too barbarous to relate. Added to this, the sandal-wood traders had been to the island, and wherever they had set their foot a white face was hated.

Night after night Selah lay down in his clothes, not expecting to see another day dawn. In the daytime his few possessions and his cooking-utensils were stolen. He was threatened with war-clubs, and many a time had spears thrown at

him. No one could be trusted. The swarthy chiefs who to-day promised him protection were to-morrow his enemies. A violent storm and the death of a child were equally laid at his door. More than once his little house was surrounded at night, and wild, dark faces looked in through the window, while the war-conchs sounded outside, and the inland tribes came to feast upon the white man's body. God only knows how he escaped! It was part of his faith, and part also of his religion, to carry no firearms. He had come to Taro Island with a message of peace, and he would not have shed blood even in self-defence. When a man-o'-war called at the island, and the captain urged him to escape from almost certain death, Harrison, looking at him with his steadfast eyes, said, "I have not finished my work."

The big, fair-bearded sailor, in his smart blue uniform, laid his hand kindly on the young man's shoulder.

"Have you any right to throw away your life?" he said.

Selah gave one of the rare smiles which made his face beautiful. He touched the neat, dark

uniform with its gold lace—the dress so distinctly a sailor's and a gentleman's.

“I have heard that Captain Gould is not so very careful of his own life,” he said.

So the man-o'-war sailed away again, and Captain Gould, looking back at the island through his telescope, said, as Patteson said of John Paton, “He makes me feel ashamed of myself.”

And Selah Harrison returned to his little wooden house, with the sugar-cane leaves and reeds thatching it. And the naked warriors fought for him amongst themselves that night in such numbers that their bodies were left as useless, and stank upon the beach.

Almost everything was against him. The sickness which visited the island was ascribed to him; the most friendly of the natives could not be trusted for long, and the recent murders of missionaries on other islands had shaken their superstitious awe of the white man.

At Erromanga the blood of Harris and Williams had stained the beach; and now Selah heard of the massacre of his friends the Gordons at the same place. At Tanna John Paton had laid his

young wife and infant boy in their grave by the coral reef, and day and night watched beside it lest the fair bodies should be stolen by the cannibal chiefs. Johnstone, with his nerve power shattered by a blow from a club, had died there too. The Mathiesons had sunk under ill-health and privations; their graves are on Maré and Aneityum. Nihill died after two years' perilous work on Nengoné. Later on, "Coley" Patteson was borne from Unkapu with five knots tied in the native palm leaves lying on his breast, and five wounds underneath the leaves. Atkins was shot at the same time by a poisoned arrow, and died in agony.

And men and women, sitting in their peaceful homes in England, with the fire burning cheerfully on the hearth, and the policeman's protecting step sounding comfortably on the pavement outside, tell each other pleasantly that missionaries are the greatest humbugs on earth. This statement is both consoling and justificatory. It is also indicative of that fine spirit of self-preservation which leads us to condemn the thing that might seem to condemn us. It is such a solace to condemn. It

is most comfortable to believe in a gray level of conduct. And it is more than fatiguing—it requires a big heart and a fine nature—to recognize a hero.

In the midst of dangers and frequent defeats, Harrison had, in five years' time, reared a church on Taro Island, and had founded a tiny mission-house. He had sunk wells, had planted a garden, and had almost forgotten his mother tongue. The natives who had been baptized and who formed his following now loved him blindly, and were heartily afraid of him. He had got into the solitary man's habit of thinking aloud, and the dark-skinned islanders, listening outside the unglazed windows of his little house, whispered to each other that the white man was talking to the Great Spirit. Perhaps he was. God seemed very near to the lonely man in his little wooden house, with the banyan trees about it, and the white waves washing on the coral reef below. His dreams were full of heavenly visions, and his waking thoughts were tinged with the glory of the night. Angels seemed to walk beside him on his most perilous journeys, and each guardian spirit

had the face of Constance and the kind eyes of the girl he loved.

On one occasion, having landed on one of the smaller islands among a hostile tribe, he was surrounded and led away to be put to death. On his way to the place of martyrdom he seemed to hold converse with some one invisible who walked by his side. A great fear and awe fell upon his would-be murderers, and they fled away into the woods and left him.

When he had completed his tiny church, and his own house was built, the vision of Constance began to come and take the vacant chair beside him, and sometimes in the early morning he pictured her, all too clearly, standing beneath the banyan trees in the garden.

And the thought grew daily—would she come to him? No, it was impossible. His visits to the smaller islands would have to cease, for he could never leave her alone in Taro, nor could he take her with him. The supply of food was precarious, and the natives, even the most friendly, could not be trusted not to turn treacherous.

Of course the work would suffer. Selah told

himself a hundred times it would not, but all the time he knew that, in the present condition of the island, the care of a wife would materially hinder the spread of the Gospel. He tried to control his visions, and, failing to do so, he endeavoured to interpret them according to his own desires. It was a time of weakness and distress. He tried to explain the girl's constant seeming presence, by saying that her image had been "sent." He had all a solitary's unconscious superstitiousness. Bit by bit he lost the proper perspective of things, as the man who lives alone, ay, who thinks alone, must invariably do. He began to respond to strange "calls" that came to him in the watches of the night, and he would set out for an island of hostile tribes with a wonderful rapt look on his face and a smile on his lips. He carried a charmed life. With his inherent tendency to give himself utterly and to the fullest extent, whether it were to work or to repentance, to love or to exhortation, he gave his whole soul to the conversion of the heathen. His zeal consumed him. He became lean and attenuated, and his eyes gleamed with a feverish brightness. His temples had gray

hollows in them, and his strong cheek-bones were almost devoid of flesh. He lived on fruit and grain, and slept little, passing his nights in prayer and in communing with his God. The spirit in him was so strong that it served to keep alive his body.

In the rainy season he became prostrate with illness, and ever he thought that Constance watched by his bed and nursed him.

In the winter of the year in which he was so ill, Coley Patteson, the saintly Bishop of Melanesia, who, if any name can be "named above the rest where each was greater than the great, each better than the best," is surely the prince of missionaries, came to visit Taro. Patteson's charm of manner, his sweet reasonableness, and splendid common-sense acted like a tonic to the sick man.

"Get away for a change," the bishop said—the man who had been captain of the Eton Eleven knowing the full value of a healthy body. He took Harrison with him in his schooner *Southern Cross*, and landed him at Auckland, where a few weeks among the jolly Melanesian boys in St. Andrew's College, Kohimarama, wonderfully restored the invalid's health. He no longer saw

the vision of Constance standing by him, but he still dreamed of her, and in his dreams he saw her face, and it was full of trouble and pain.

The bishop, at this time, was about to start on a journey to Sydney, to collect funds for the mission. Selah came to him suddenly one day, and said, speaking in his curious concentrated way, like one who listens all the time for promptings from another,—

“I should like to accompany you to Sydney, sir.”

Patteson gladly complied.

“I am going home,” said Harrison.

“To England?”

“Yes.”

He left his church in charge of a native convert, and went to Sydney.

There, while he waited for the ship that was to take him to England, he was witness of a tremendous thunderstorm which broke sheer over the town, and shook the very hills to their foundations. The lightning played in blinding flashes over the harbour, and the heavens were riven as when a sword splits in sunder a web of sable cloth. In the roar of the elements, and while he watched the

magnificent fury of the storm, Selah Harrison, his nerves strung to an almost impossible tension by years of loneliness and peril, by illness, and now still more by the extraordinary amount of electricity in the air, saw with a prophet's clearness that his heart was not wholly given to God—that he was, in fact, interpreting dreams to forward his own desires; and as he stood by his window and looked out on the night, he bowed his head on his hands and wept.

The old solemn question, "What doest thou here?" beat at his heart through the rage of the storm, and it seemed to him as the voice of God.

He left Sydney the day following, and shipped again for the islands of the Southern Seas, only to find that a war tribe had landed on Taro, and had burnt his church to the ground.

Then Selah prayed, and said, "O Lord, let the dear vision of her I love be far from me, for it is indeed a snare unto me."

He thought that night she came and said good-bye to him, and her face was no longer troubled, but smiling. And the man was content.

In a far-off peaceful country, in a stately house with quiet woods about it, and ordered gardens where sweet flowers grew, a faithful nurse, watching by Constance Napier's bed, whispered to a man with white lips and anxious eyes who waited near,—

“She will live now. Her face has lost its restless look. And she has asked for her child.”

CHAPTER II.

"WILL you kindly hand me the war-clubs and idols as I want them," said Harrison to Janet M'Call, who happened to be the person standing nearest him. He was giving a lecture upon mission work on Taro, and he had brought with him a number of weapons and native gods to illustrate his discourse.

"I'll be verra glad," said Janet, trembling at the conspicuousness of her position so near the platform. She pursed up her awkward mouth and blushed a pretty pink. Janet was often teased about her blushes.

She had a deft way with her in spite of her diffidence. She found the different curios as Selah required them, and handed them quietly to him. He had seldom had so little trouble in lecturing. As a rule he mislaid his things, and hunted for them during painful pauses in his discourse. He would never become an orator, but his earnestness

was constraining. It carried with it an appeal and a conviction which won attention from the most unsympathetic. The very absence of anything sentimental or flowery in the delivery of his message helped to make it real.

To-night, with Janet to help him, passing him the right things when he wanted them, and even handing him a glass of water when his lips got dry, he spoke better than he had ever done before. When he had finished, and she was putting his strange collection into neat bundles, he thanked her gratefully.

"It has been the greatest assistance having you here," he said.

And Janet's heart bounded.

He was at Mr. Mains's house next day, when Janet was taking tea with the minister's sister. And the week following she met him by chance when he was wandering like a lost person.

"I am looking for a house which used to be here," he said; "but unless I have forgotten the place more completely than I imagined I had, it must have been removed."

Janet told him that the old house had long

since disappeared, and remarked that Mr. Harrison must notice great changes in the town.

"Yes, it has altered much. But I think one feels more the changes that are not apparent."

"Aw, indeed," said Janet politely.

"I used to meet with a great deal of kindness in this old city," said Selah. "In spite of its hurry and bustle, it used to seem to me that the people here ever had time to be kind. But naturally one is forgotten after fifteen years' absence."

Something of the old boyish feeling of resentment against alteration, and a pathetic craving for old times, came strongly upon him. He thought of the night when he crept back to his old home and found it tenanted by strangers, and he turned to Janet and said,—

"I used to go for a sail down the river Clyde sometimes when I was at Glasgow University. I should like to go there again. One used to have an idea, especially if one was in trouble, that the hills were one's friends, and sympathized with one's grief. They are friends who never change. I should like to see them again."

"You'll no care to go doon the watter alone?" said Janet; and she blushed scarlet, and said to herself, "I hope this 'ull no reach the ears of any other body."

"I am accustomed to being alone," said Selah simply.

Janet took her courage in both hands. She argued that men were blate, and lassies aye gave them a little assistance.

"We were thinking to go down to Roseneath, Saturday furst," she said.

"Roseneath—a sweet village," said Selah Harrison. "Do you mean that I may join your party, Miss M'Call?"

"That's as you please," said Janet coyly.

Selah looked perplexed. "I fear I misconstrued your words," he said, in a tone of distress. "Pray forgive me for being intrusive."

Janet was almost in tears. "Alas! alas!" she was saying to herself, "at thirty-four ye daurna be backward."

"Oh, I *hawp* you'll come," she said earnestly; and Selah, feeling slightly bewildered, accepted the invitation.

They started very early on Saturday, for the M'Calls were of the class who make the most of a holiday. They carried hand-bags, and paper-bags with spots of grease beginning to appear upon them, and Jasper M'Call contributed a festive note to the affair by wearing his "burying" gloves. Janet had not slept all night, and appeared at the early breakfast in a state of nervous flurry which her mother described as "the awfulest temper iver she'd seen." Mrs. M'Call, in black silk, and with a fierce-looking bonnet on her head, took her pleasure with the grim melancholy of her nation and her class.

Mr. M'Call was in a humorous mood. But let it not be thought that he was either gay or jocund. Mr. M'Call's humour was of the inward sort which feeds itself upon jokes unseen by those about him. Mrs. M'Call was etting to be off; she had locked up the clock, and thought it was getting late. Jasper knew that there was plenty of time, and ate his breakfast with aggressive slowness. That was real comic! When Mrs. M'Call at last gave in and asked the time,

he replied "time enough," and the corners of his mouth nearly puckered into a smile.

Janet sat quite silent. She, also, like her mother, would have given much to know the right time; but Jasper was master in his own house, and his big silver watch was for his own use. She sat silent, but her hand twitched. She moistened her thumbs and retied her bonnet strings.

"Here's oor Janet as ardent as a lassie to meet her young man," soliloquized Jasper, the man of pawky humour.

Janet's blush was painful to witness. She drew her mother out into the tiny "landing," and caught her by the sleeve.

"Sure's death," she said, "if he's goin' to quiz me aboot Mr. Harrison I'll no gang."

"We're no aff yet," said Mrs. M'Call, with something of Jasper's dry humour.

The next moment they heard Mr. M'Call get up to put on his coat, and Janet had just one frenzied moment in which to rush and change her bonnet for her hat.

"Ye're daft," said her mother, noticing the change.

"Don't let on," entreated Janet, with a look towards her father, to whom all head-gear was alike.

When in due course they reached the quay, Harrison was waiting for them. He looked very tall amongst the crowd; and the still distant look on his fine face seemed to separate him from his fellows.

Jasper appropriated him at once, to prevent his being bothered by the women. He was proud to have Mr. Harrison with them, and he introduced him to the captain of the steamer, who was a cousin of his own.

Janet and her mother sat on camp-stools, and looked after the paper-bags and the waterproofs. They ate dry scones, and the non-effusive Janet did some tatting. But it is hardly an exaggeration to say that her heart was nearly broken with disappointment. She had counted so much on to-day's outing!—now she sat on an uneasy camp-stool and was forgotten. She could hardly repress a silly girlish sob which came to her throat; but when she had swallowed and scraped two or three times to get rid of it, her mother asked if she were sea-sick, and Janet desisted.

The two women did not converse. Mrs. M'Call sat and looked admiringly at Jasper's black clothes, and wondered if the house at No. 13 Nicholson Street was on fire. And Janet sat beside her and tried to face the desolating fact that she was for ever an old maid. She shivered a little, and all the solitariness of her life surged over her in a wave whose weight was awful.

As the steamer was nearing Roseneath pier, Selah Harrison came up and said to her,—

"We are almost at Roseneath now. Can I carry any of your wraps for you?"

Janet said, "I'll do fine," and grasped her bag tightly; and Harrison went on,—

"We have had a delightful sail, have we not?"

Poor Janet! it seemed to heighten the misery of the journey to be thus accused of having enjoyed it. The girlish, choking sob came to her throat again, and she said with difficulty,—

"I'm no that partial to the watter."

They partook of their modest lunch under the shade of some trees near the shore, and Jasper went to the inn for lemonade.

It is believed by some that a repast of scones and lemonade will render the victim incapable of eating another meal for many days. The family of M'Call, however, and their unfastidious guest seemed to regard the stodgy scones and gassy lemonade as excellent fare.

"Father" gave in to Selah in the matter of saying grace, although it was an office he did not willingly relinquish to any one. And Mrs. M'Call, with closed eyes and a look of earnest devotion on her face, listened critically to "the blessing," and thought that Jasper would have done it better.

After luncheon the little party strolled into the woods. The woods of Roseneath after fifteen years on the island of Taro! The cool smell of damp moss; the sunshine flickering through the trees in delicious yellow patches, broken by soft shadows of gently stirring leaves; the song of dear, homely, speckled thrushes and yellow-billed blackbirds; the treasures of greenest fern and sweet shy flowers; down by the road, the waters of the Gareloch sleeping in quiet bays; some pink-cheeked bairns playing by the shore;

and beyond, the hills that they call the Duke of Argyll's bowling-green with the sunshine upon them, and the quiet shadows of clouds resting like a blessing on their grand old shoulders!

Selah Harrison could scarce realize his surroundings. To the tired man who had borne the burden and heat of the day, the pleasant woods of Roseneath seemed like some exquisite vision of quiet and peacefulness and pure loveliness. His heart was full to bursting, and he never heard a word of Jasper M'Call's dissertation upon public worship. He was saying to himself, with the exultation of one who makes a great discovery, "All these are Thine, and we are Thine!" One scheme of life, one God! The blending of the natural and the spiritual till it is recognized as one transcendent whole; the feeling of oneness with nature which poets and some children know—poets who can call the birds their brothers, and quiet children who know what the birds and the beasties are saying: all this, and the seeming to see almost into the mind of God, and of understanding in some faint, dim way His plans who made all things good, came upon him with a feeling of passionate exaltation.

Some of us have realized the splendid surprise of his discovery. To Selah it came suddenly, though perhaps he had been slowly learning about it during fifteen solitary years. Only to-day, however, did he understand why we love that which is beautiful. It was a revelation; and there were tears in his eyes as he looked far away to the purple hills, and thanked God for them.

"And what I say is this," wound up Mr. M'Call, "none of your æsthetic worship for me. Four plain walls and a pulpit are all that is necessary, to my way of thinking. What do you think?"

"Not even four plain walls and a pulpit," said Selah.

They were interrupted by Mrs. M'Call, who "cried" to them to stop, for she had lost her "bahg," and was afraid she had left it on the beach. Her distress was genuine, and she begged Jasper to return and help her to find it.

Janet thought that the whole party would retrace their steps; but Selah was loath to leave the woods, and said to her,—

"Might we, do you think, remain here till your parents return? There will be no difficulty, I imagine, in finding Mrs. M'Call's bag."

"We'd better keep together," said Jasper, "for fear ye miss the bawt."

Janet waited submissively for the decision to be made. She may have paled a little, but if she did, no one noticed it.

"Might we not arrange to meet on the pier in time for the steamer?" Selah said, with gentle obstinacy. Perhaps he would never see the woods of Roseneath again!

"Come away, Jasper," interrupted Mrs. M'Call, "or maybe ma bahg will be gone."

Thus driven, Jasper walked off with his wife, and Selah and Janet were left alone.

All Janet's courage, all her hope, and all her conversation had left her. She walked demurely, in tight boots, by Harrison's side, and did not speak at all. He thought her silence very gentle and refreshing after Mr. M'Call's emphatic conversation, and after a long spell he turned to her, and said gratefully,—

"You are very patient. I fear I am but

a sorry companion for a pleasant outing like this."

Janet smiled a little wistfully, and said in her kind, plain way,—

"I hope you'll not make strangers of us, I'm sure."

All hope of love was past, but Janet could never be anything but cordial and kindly.

"When one's mind is very full of thought it makes speech difficult," said Selah; "and indeed," he continued truthfully, "I was always a bad talker."

"Scotland will look strange to you after Taro," said Janet, conversationally.

"Yes," he said; "and to-day all things are new."

The strange note of happiness in his voice made Janet's heart flutter for a moment, but it sank again when Selah went on.

"Isn't it wonderful," he said, his eyes shining, "how God seems to take one aside sometimes, and explains His—I had almost said His *motives*—to us? The glass through which we see so dimly is clear for a moment, and that which is revealed can never be forgotten."

He began in a half dreamy way to show her the things that he saw, and Janet's quiet "yes" and "indeed," did not disturb the current of his thoughts. It is doubtful whether she understood one word of what he said.

"I remember when I was a boy," Selah went on, and Janet began to feel more interested, "re-visiting an old familiar place, and feeling, as I felt the other day, a sort of indignation at the changes which I noticed; not in the houses and roads, nor in the woods and fields, so much as in the invisible environment. It seemed to me that it was only the seen and temporal which remained unchanged. I said to myself, 'Feeling and love, opinions even, and tastes, and all the minds and hearts of men, all change; and it is only the old familiar outward things—the hills and trees, the fields, and perhaps an old house which we have loved—which remain unaltered.' But God has guided me to-day a step beyond this. He has showed me that the Great Love which underlies all earthly love can never alter. Ay, and that the power which raised the hills and caused the streams to flow is eternal as ever, although the stream should never wear again

the aspect that we remember, and although the hills should become valleys and the sea a dry plain."

"It's nice to think that something is sure," said Janet, very dimly discerning the drift of Selah's argument.

"You have felt that?" said Harrison eagerly.

Janet retracted instantly. "No, no," she said, blushing confusedly; "I dawn't reely understand about the sea drying up and that." And then she added, "But just whiles, when I'm in a strange place, I never feel at home until I've said my prayers."

"Have you been much away from home?" Selah asked suddenly.

"Hoots, yes," said Janet, with an air of experience; "I go to Dundee to my aunt ivery summer."

They walked on in silence again for nearly a mile. Once or twice Janet spoke, but as she received no answer, she too relapsed into nervous silence. Harrison seemed plunged in painful thought. The rapt look had left his face. Once Janet thought she heard him murmur a prayer,

and he clasped his hands together and walked with his head down.

"Shall we sit down?" he said at last abruptly.

They seated themselves on a felled trunk of a tree, and as Harrison seemed preoccupied, Janet, after glancing at him once or twice, made use of the opportunity to unbutton her boots and release her much-compressed feet.

"Miss M'Call," said Harrison, and his voice had that peculiar tension or *waiting* inflection in it which characterized all his utterances—the halting sound of the speaker who waits for promptings—"Miss M'Call, I am going to ask you to come farther than Dundee."

Janet tucked her stockinged feet under her dress, and said,—

"Were you thinking you would like another excursion?"

He hardly heard her, but went on in his halting way,—

"There are some who have been found willing to give up home and lands for the gospel's sake."

Another pause.

"Yes?" said Janet.

"And although, perhaps, I ought to tell you that, so far as earthly love is concerned, I believe a man gives his best once and for ever; and—and"—it was the first time he had ever spoken to any one of Constance, and it came hard to him—"I gave mine—once. But"—his face kindled—"there is work, noble, self-sacrificing work for you on Taro, if you can feel that God is willing that you should be a help-meet for me amongst the heathen in those lands. Will you come? Will you be my wife?"

It was Janet's first proposal.

CHAPTER III.

SHE expected so little, poor Janet! Her first proposal hardly struck her as lacking much that a woman expects in such a declaration. She could not compare it with any other offer she had received.

"D'ye mean it?" she said at last.

Her voice shook, and the homely gray-green eyes were full of a half-anxious, half-joyous bewilderment. She turned and looked at the man beside her. He had never appeared more handsome and dignified than he did as he stood there, with his grave face and beautiful eyes, his tall figure clad in comely black. He was waiting for his answer, and the fact that his happiness lay in her hands filled Janet with that proud, almost glorious feeling of yielding up everything to the man who has thus appealed to her, which is the prevailing characteristic of most women's love.

"I'll do anything for you," she said at last.

He took her hands in his, and his touch made her tremble.

"May God bless you," he said, "and make us both His faithful servants, following where He calls, and doing as He commands!"

And so it came to pass that Janet walked back to Roseneath pier leaning on Selah's arm. She had wondered if he would kiss her, but Selah did not think of so doing till the wedding-day. But his arm she would have! And if in all Scotland there lived that day a prouder woman than Janet M'Call, let another pen depict her.

That walk from the woods to the pier! It was a royal progress. What although no one but a few country folk witnessed it? Even they seemed to look admiringly at her man.

Then the meeting at the pier, when she distinctly heard her mother say, "Losh me, what's Janet daein' wi' the minister's airm?" and her father's sarcastic rejoinder, "She's no blate."

The teasing she gave her parents on the return journey, never "letting on" that she was engaged! Last of all, the moment when the wonderful news

could no longer be contained, and she drew her mother down below to the cabin of the steamer, and exclaimed in one gasp,—

“Mr. Harrison has come forward!”

“This ’ull be news for the Thomsons,” was all the comment made by Mrs. McCall; but Janet had never seen a prouder look on that well-known face.

“I’ll make Jasper ask for this,” she said presently, with a lively sense of her husband’s closeness that morning. “Not a worrrd shall he hear till he spiers.”

And oh, the sly humour those two women indulged in that evening! The nudges they gave each other under father’s very nose! The look of assumed indifference they put on when they caught father’s eye! The covert allusions they made to folk who could keep things to themselves too if they tried! The request, wrung at last from Mrs. McCall, that Jasper would look at Janet, and see if he could guess anything, and his prompt rejoinder that he would not be fashed! Are not these things all a part of that happy night?

When Mrs. M'Call had taken from the press the clock, and the spoons and forks which she had carefully locked up before leaving home, they sat down to supper, and she started to try and provoke Jasper's curiosity by hints given in another way.

"Ye wouldn't think Mr. Harrison much of a man, now, would you?" she asked, keeping her face quiet, but cocking her elbow at Janet.

Jasper fell into the trap. "He's grand," he said. "And it's just because he's above you weemen's intelleck that you canna appreciate him."

Mrs. M'Call looked at Janet, who got up suddenly and marched to the cupboard for a spoon, remarking, with her back towards her father, and in a voice that would hardly keep steady,—

"I'm gawn to be married on him."

Oh, they had their revenge that evening, Janet and her mother! How grudgingly they parted with details of the news! How they hung over points of humour which only they themselves could see! How they tasted with delight the future glories of Janet's position!

At ten o'clock Mrs. M'Call found her daughter in her room putting on her hat.

"I'm just goin' to take that pattrun back to the Thomsons'," she said defiantly.

"I wad like Mr. Mains to be the first to hear," replied Mrs. M'Call.

"Lizzie Thomson can't carry the news far to-night," said Janet, "and we can see the minister first thing to-morrow forenoon." And she departed—without the "pattrun"—to call on her neighbours.

It was a triumph, that visit to the Thomsons', but it was almost extinguished by succeeding triumphs. The forenoon, stolen from school-hours and spent—in black silks and bonnets—at Mr. Mains's; his surprise and congratulations; the visits to different shops, and the hints that Mrs. M'Call dropped while purchasing every smallest article, to the intent that "you couldn't hope to keep a daughter always." The return home, when the Thomsons were discovered leaning out of their window at No. 18, and Janet's remark, made in a tone of great annoyance, which nevertheless conveyed a very richness of approval, that "some people had no manners, and that very soon, she believed, she wouldn't be able to go outside the

house without folk peering at her from ahint the blinds."

But perhaps the teas given upon subsequent occasions, to show off Janet's young man, were the dearest triumphs of all. How sore a trial these festive occasions were to Selah Harrison only he himself knew, and that vaguely and distressfully. He did not dream of staying away when Janet asked him to come, and, happily, he never for a moment guessed that he was the central figure upon these occasions, nor that the teas were given in order to exhibit himself. He only felt wearied by them, and hopelessly shy.

His future father-in-law was the person who most actively ministered to his discomfort. Jasper had accepted the situation with his usual sense of humour. He made pawky jokes at Selah's expense, and quizzed him in public in a way that caused exquisite suffering to his victim. Selah accepted it all patiently. He had an idea that long ago, when he was a boy, it used to be considered the right and even the kindly thing thus to make the lives of those about to marry a misery to themselves, and he could only imagine that the fashion was still in

vogue. The only thing to be done was to marry as soon as possible. He had still a number of addresses to deliver, but as soon as they had been given, he would be married, and Janet would go with him on his lecturing tour through the other towns of Scotland. In November he must sail for Taro.

Janet complied with the plan, and Jasper, upon being consulted, said, with his usual delightful candour, "Ye'r bawth auld enough to knaw yer awn minds," and chuckled over the remark for hours afterwards.

So Janet was married, and there were white gloves and favours, speeches, and a carriage and pair of grays; there were hand-shakings, and tea-drinking, and jokes; there was a party in white cotton gloves who banged doors; and there were the Thomsons, critical and gorgeous.

Selah never knew how he got through the day. He found out—what he had in no way realized before—that it is impossible for a man to efface himself at his own wedding. He was "intro-jooiced" freely; he was congratulated and chaffed; he had his health drunk, and oh! misery, found

that he was expected to make a speech. (To the day of his death he never could recall what he had said.)

A small boy in a kilt—a youthful cousin, Selah imagined — pervaded the scene, and his bright-coloured tartans, pushing hither and thither, always remained in Selah's mind as part of the painfulness of the day. At first he had drawn the child towards him, and tried to make friends; but Alick defeated this kindly object by remarking critically, with a look towards the bride,—

“Ye nicht hae dun a sicht better, I'm thinkin'.”

Janet, who stood close by, said, laughing good-naturedly,—

“Ye'r no an admirer of mine, then, Alick?”

“Admire ye?” quoth Alick. “Wummun, ye'r scarcely human.”

It was over at last. Mr. and Mrs. Harrison drove to the station in the hired carriage with its gray horses, and some one tied a white satin slipper to the wheel, and another put rice in the umbrellas and rugs. And Selah, in utter bewilderment, wondered why he and his wife should be made so unpleasantly conspicuous; but Janet's radiant smile

beamed through it all, and her eyes were shy and happy like a girl's eyes.

But at the station some hideous qualm assailed her. She darted into the waiting-room and glanced at a mirror, came back to the platform and tried to catch a sight of herself in the windows of a passing train. Last of all, being seated in the railway carriage, she gazed anxiously into a bright brass knob, and glanced appealingly to her husband.

"Sellah!" she exclaimed — all Scotch people insist upon a charming independence in the matter of pronunciation, and this was Janet's way of pronouncing her husband's name all her life—"Sellah!" — her voice took a tone of painful anxiety — "you don't think it is too young-looking?"

"Who?" said Selah, roused from a reverie, and looking at the flushed face opposite him.

"Ma—ma bonnet," faltered Janet. "It's all that Lizzie Thomson! She gie'd me such a look as I cam away."

The bonnet was a white one, trimmed with forget-me-nots and long trails of bright green moss, glistening with many glass dew-drops.

"I'm afraid," said Selah, "I do not know what constitutes youthfulness in a bonnet."

Then, because he saw something in his wife's face which he did not in the least understand, but something that was blank and a little pitiful, and touched with apprehension, he leaned forward and drew her towards him and kissed her.

CHAPTER IV.

IN November they sailed for Taro. And that was a long, long voyage. The journey to Sydney alone occupied one hundred and sixteen days, and Janet was far from well all the time. But her happiness was as fresh as ever, and her heart thrilled with pride every time she paced the deck with her tall, good-looking husband. Sometimes, indeed, it almost seemed as though her plain, pleasant face could hardly express all the joy and pride of her heart; but her simple, kindly nature taught her to express her gratitude by various small acts of mercy. She was the slave of every one on board the ship—nursing sea-sick people, finding gifts of clothing for some of the poorer steerage passengers, putting in stitches for feckless folk, and amusing children by the hour. But nothing that she could do seemed sufficient to express her love and good-fellowship for all the world, and her boundless gratitude for all she had received.

When happiness comes to a woman late in life, it is an unexpected gift, and almost overwhelming. Janet's eyes often had happy tears in them.

To sit beside Selah on deck, with the ripple of the water sounding softly by the ship's side, the hardly filled sails throwing a cool shadow over them, and the ropes tapping gently on the masts; to lead the hymns at the services he held; to enter the room, as she invariably did, leaning on his arm—ah! that made her heart beat and glow.

But the best part of her joy was Janet's own, and no one might know the absorbing wonder of it.

Her boy was born at Sydney. He almost cost Janet her life, but that was not too much to endure for him. Never was there such a boy! Janet was glad that at least a few folk could take a keek at him before they embarked for Taro. She called him Jasper, and had his photograph taken as soon as she was able to go out. By some instinct she knew exactly what was good for this wonderful child and what was not. The most experienced mothers could not have given her hints on the interesting subject of diet and clothes. No one was allowed to

do anything for him but herself, and she could have given a lecture on the subject of pelisses and bibs and goodness knows what besides. In the matter of attiring that baby for its walk—a problem which to the uninitiated mind would seem to require a university education to solve—Janet was an adept at once. She powder-puffed him, and rolled him about, she supported his exceedingly wobbly head with one hand, and yet was never a hand short in doing the rest of him. It was, in fact, a wonderful performance altogether.

It seemed hard to leave Sydney just when people were beginning to take notice of him, and after two ladies had stopped in the street and asked whose child he was.

“He’s mine!”

It certainly would have been gratifying to have had the opportunity of saying this a little oftener; but Selah had finished his work in Sydney, and was eager to carry the gospel once more to his beloved islanders.

They sailed in a trading boat for Taro, and dropped anchor in a little bay fringed with palms and protected by a coral reef. It was a lovely

spot, but one, alas ! which had often been the scene of bloody wars and hideous sacrifices.

A number of canoes put off at once to the boat, and yells were raised for the Teacher come back to Taro once more. Selah's eyes were full as he waved his hand and shouted a welcome to the dusky warriors. These men were his first-fruits to the Lord. Through him they had, with God's help, found salvation. The Christianization of Taro Island was the trophy that he had brought and laid humbly and lovingly at the feet of the King. There was not a man amongst those people, however weak, however dishonest, however treacherous, but Selah loved him, and would have died to save him. They were his brothers, these simple, ignorant, blood-stained folk, and all that he had sacrificed for them only made him love them better.

"My love to you!" He called out the familiar greeting to them in their own tongue, and his heart was full, and tears were in his eyes. Surely it was a triumph such as St. Paul felt when he exclaimed of his Corinthian converts, "Great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all tribulation!"

"Eh, Sellah," said Janet, "the shameless bodies! Is yon a' the clothes they wear?"

She put up her umbrella, and held it down over the child, and before her own face, and in this fashion they landed at Taro.

Afterwards, in the years that followed, Janet's one idea of missionizing was to clothe the natives. And by-and-by they so thoroughly accepted Janet's gospel of clothes that it became the sign manual of Christianity on the island—the more complete the conversion, the greater number of clothes. And one grilling day in summer a black lady came to the Mission Church in three topcoats and a grass petticoat.

Thereafter, Janet manufactured kilts for the men, and substituted decent skirts for the women's short grass petticoats. Referring to the kilts, Selah suggested that these garments might, with propriety, be made a little longer. But though civilized, Janet was Scottish.

"I couldna bear tae see a man in a kilt that does more than touch the ground when he kneels," she said.

So the Taro Islanders wore kilts of the regulation length.

The little house, with its thatching of leaves and reeds, and its floors of coral broken small, to which Selah Harrison brought his bride, was not a luxurious dwelling. But, bless you, Janet made it pretty and home-like in less than a week ! The number of antimacassars she had brought with her ! The bright pretty pictures and the simple furniture, the cretonnes and cushions with which she inveigled that little house into looking bright and comfortable ! And the way she harried the orphan natives who were her helpers—always in strongest Scottish dialect, so it didn't matter—the amount of redding up she managed to do, although there were so few things to be misplaced ; the kilts and skirts she made, and the excellent dinners she contrived out of nothing at all ! Will not these things count for something when the labourers in the vineyard get their penny a day !

It was sometimes disappointing that "Sellah" did not notice what he was eating for dinner, and utterly failed to remark such important matters as that a new photograph had been hung or a cushion re-covered. But the baby's bright eyes never failed to take everything in. The intelli-

gence of that child! Even Selah noticed it, and the native orphans worshipped him—a proceeding which Janet thought perfectly orthodox and proper. When he began to talk, you would hardly credit the wise things he, according to Janet's interpretation, said. He could walk at twelve months, and goodness knows how early he cut his teeth. At fifteen months he called a black-faced chief with white hair "ga-ga" (a term of opprobrium used by the very young), and then and there Janet confessed to him that "she never could abide thae *durrrty, thievin' niggers*." It was a secret which she had kept until now in her own heart, but she and the baby told all their innermost thoughts to each other, and, as Janet said, "It's little use trying to keep anything from him, for he just guesses a' thing afore I speak."

She made a little nursery for him under the cocoanut trees, and there Jasper would lie and suck his thumbs—a native girl beside him—while Janet did her housework and watched him from the window. The windows were glazed now, and the wonderful baby used to look up and crow and kick his fat legs when Janet tapped upon the pane.

She tapped very often. Seeing him was not enough; she must make him smile—must run out into the strange nursery and take the wee lad up in her arms, and tell him that he was “mother’s dawrlin’, her ain wee boy.”

Such foolish talk! But Jasper quite understood, and knew that it only meant the re-telling of the old story, that there’s no love like a mother’s love, no matter how she expresses it.

Meanwhile Selah worked and taught unwearyingly. He had begun a translation of the Bible into Taro dialect, and this cost him years of patient labour. He had a joiner’s shop on the island, had built a boat, and established a few simple industries. And each day that dawned he reconsecrated to selfless, brave, indomitable effort to bring souls to God. It was characteristic of him that he never gave in. The disappointments he met with were many, and superstition had an iron grip on his followers. He never could gauge, even amongst his converts, how much of their belief was Christian, and how much was still hopeless idolatry.

One of the baptized native teachers lost his

child. He thereupon made an image of Jehovah and cast it into the sea, "to spite the Great Spirit." Selah was reminded of an incident in his college days, when a fellow-student said to him, "I have never said my prayers since I asked God to spare my mother's life, and He let her die."

Selah Harrison's success in dealing with superstition and unbelief lay in the fact that he himself had no doubts. He spoke with absolute assurance on all points. God was about his bed and about his path—a being whose reality and whose presence were living facts. His faith was stupendous. Did any of the natives, with natural cunning, put abstruse questions to him, he answered them out of the Bible—God's Word; no other answer was possible. Of the difficulties of reconciling religion and science he knew nothing. God had said certain things with His own mouth; he that believed them should not be damned. It is difficult to imagine, now that doubts have become so much part of our religion, what will in the future be the message to take to heathen lands—or to Board Schools.

Once the feet of those who brought the

gospel message were called most beautiful upon the mountains. One wonders if they will be as beautiful when shod with the gospel of doubt, as they carry the message to the isles that wait for Him.

Selah Harrison was not, as I have said, burdened with difficulties of a sceptical sort. And if his religion was primitive, it was certainly sincere. Perhaps an ordinary, sociable, beef-and-pudding-eating Englishman will scarcely understand the intensity of this man's faith. For years he had lived alone with God, and he realized His presence with the same passionate intensity that he believed His promises. Had Selah commanded fire from heaven to destroy the island of Taro, he would most certainly have expected to see it consumed to ashes before his eyes. Did he sink a well, he did so with prayer, and was in no way surprised to find that he had hit upon the right place to find water. He lived perpetually in an attitude of prayer and communing with the Unseen. And if he was not a very companionable person to live with—"Well, I've got Jasper," Janet would say proudly; "I'll do wanting a' thing else."

She went away to dress him in his best pelisse, for this was Sunday, and the best thread socks and shiny boots with white stitchings must be put on, "just the same as if he lived in Scotland." What fun she had with him, catching him when he ran from her with shrill screams of delight, and holding him close in her motherly arms, and kissing his short, silky hair, and crooning over him! Then Jasper was off again, toddling with stiff feet (when does a baby learn to bend its feet?) round the table, and looking back laughing over his shoulder till he fell flat on his nose.

He picked himself up and ran to the open door, then turned and fled back to Janet, his face all puckered up, and his eyes big with fright.

"What is it, lambie? What frightened the wee boy?" cried Janet, straining him to her, and hastening to the door to see what had happened.

The sight that met her eye was more grotesque than alarming (but Jasper still kept his face hidden on her shoulder). A huge native, black as ebony, and clad in one of Janet's kilts, was dancing wildly before the door. Such capers! the

Hoolichan was nothing compared to it! Such grinning and frenzied leaping and shouting!

"Sellah," said Janet, going into the little study, "here's one o' the chiefs cutting capers, and making the awfulest fool of himself iver you saw."

"Not so fast, Janet," said Selah, smiling. "Nawalih's wife has only to-day been converted, and this is a joy-dance upon the part of her Christian husband."

"He gave Jasper a pretty fright," said Janet, setting her mouth a little doggedly.

"Poor child! But Jasper must try and learn not to shrink from dark faces, for——"

"Dark faces!" interrupted Janet indignantly. "The child's well enough wi' dark faces, and there's no a braver boy than him in this globe or the other." (Janet was getting a trifle confused about the two hemispheres.) "Sellah," she said more gently, for she was seldom shrewish, and then only when her boy was concerned, "thae capers were just redeeklous, and no very seemly on the Sabbath."

"Did not David dance before the Lord?" asked Selah gently.

"Yes," said Janet; "and there's no that woman leevin' but would feel for Michal under the circumstances."

She picked up Jasper, and went into the next room to finish his toilet.

"We'll no look at the ugly black man, my bonnie," she whispered, and drew the cotton curtains of the window.

Then she and the little boy went out by the side door—both in their Sabbath braws—and walked up and down the smooth-trodden coral path. The child clung to her finger, and his gentle, dragging weight drew her very heart-strings till they ached with love. He toddled away and brought her flowers—hot little flowers crushed in his baby hands, and with no stalks to them. It seemed to Janet a beautiful attention, and she could not have borne to see him give the crumpled blossoms to any one else. Had he made friends with a black woman, that woman would not have been easily forgiven, and Janet always felt a real pity for ladies who had to share their children's love with nurses.

She took her little son indoors presently, for

the damp mists were rising, and it was Jasper's bedtime. The wee man had a cot whose sides were too low to please Janet's anxious mind. She trembled lest he should fall out, and she had bribed one of the chiefs to make a net of cocoa-nut fibre to stretch over the top. Under this net Jasper looked exactly like a calf going to market, and with an extraordinary power of imagination he and Janet used to play bo-peep through its open meshes.

She drew it to-night, and kissed him through it, then turned the lamp low, and went to teach her Bible class of girls.

"If I could just take him once or twice up and down the sunny side of Nicholson Street," she was saying to herself.

CHAPTER V.

"I HAVE bad news for you," said Selah, when he came in. Selah's Sundays were one round of toil, beginning at sunrise and ending in the dark. He had a catechist's class, a Sunday-school class, and almost every other kind of class ever devised by the Church at home or abroad. In the morning he had two services at his little church. In the afternoon he conducted "the worship" at five or six different villages, besides his numerous classes.

"You'll kill yourself," said practical Janet one day; and being very anxious about her man's bad state of health, she got cross, and added, "and that's suicide."

"It is no labour to speak with a friend," said Selah, with a rapt look on his face.

"Eh, my dear," said Janet kindly, "it's not your prayers, it's the exhorting that's wearing you out."

She heard how he agonized for the souls of

men. She had seen him, after he had besought them and pleaded with them and had failed, looking bruised with the conflict and exhausted in mind and in body. She knew, more than most people, what the souls of the heathen cost. And the islanders were so utterly untrustworthy. The converted man so often returned to his abominable heathen practices; it was difficult to reason with them, or to combat their cunning and deceit. Cannibalism and widow-burning were things of the past, it is true; Selah had raved and persuaded and threatened until these hideous practices had been given up. But murders were still usual, and often he and Janet had come across a mutilated body on their walks. Janet would turn sick at the sight; but Selah would always stop and go back for tools, and dig a decent grave for the body; and Janet would hear him at night praying for forgiveness for those who had done the ill deed.

The most obstinately heathen tribe was under the leadership of a "Sacred man" called Welemki. When this man's child was ill, Selah nursed and doctored it; but after a time the child died. He

narrowly escaped with his life that night, and got a spear wound in his heel which troubled him all his life, though he never told any one, not even Janet, about it. This village and tribe of the Sacred man were now the principal object of his work and prayers. Sometimes Janet thought it must be the very danger of his visits thither that tempted him to go. The Sacred man himself was the most repulsive-looking savage on the island, and the dark deeds done in his village were too sickening to put on paper. It was the sore spot on Taro.

Janet was inclined to let the place alone.

"It's no' worth your life, Sellah," she used to say.

But this was an aspect of the case which had never presented itself to Harrison, and he could not grasp it. He had carried his life in his hands for so long, and through so many perils, that he never considered danger and did not know fear. God always seemed to him so much nearer, as he was so much stronger, than the savages of Taro.

"I have bad news for you, Janet," said Selah, coming in from his long walk on rough tracks to the villages.

Janet gave one look at her sleeping boy, then smiled, and said,—

“It will not be very bad, I’m thinking.”

She remembered how it was always bad news to Selah when one of his converts would take to himself a plurality of wives, or when a native teacher was found to be mingling with his Christian teaching much that was rank idolatry. Now Janet thought that such things were to be expected from “poor, senseless eediot like thae blacks,” and she considered that Selah fashed himself unnecessarily about them. She felt quite easy, and said, with a smile, “It will not be very bad.”

“There is likely to be fighting,” said Harrison. “The last traders who came here left two fever patients behind them at South Creek. The disease, which is of a most deadly nature, is spreading to Welemki’s village, and he is raising war against the people of South Creek for bringing it amongst them.”

Janet went over to the cot in the corner, and looked at the little boy under the cocoanut netting.

“It’ll never come here,” she said, with her heart suddenly turned cold within her.

"I hope not," he said gravely; "but it is spreading fast."

"Can we get him away anywhere?"

"A boat may not call for weeks."

"Oh, I know that—I know that!" cried Janet wildly.

"We are in God's hands," said Selah.

"You'll not go near them, Selah?"

"My wife," he replied, "what am I here for?"

"Don't ask me to go with you," said Janet, still speaking in that wild way, so different from her usual calm cheerfulness. "I couldn't risk it for the boy; it wouldn't be right." Her face was very white, and when Selah would have spoken she waved him off as though defending herself against a foe. "A white child is better than black people, and we hev but the one bairn."

"God is able to take care of Jasper," said Selah. "He has helped us through so much; can't we trust Him to the end?"

Janet rose and began pacing the room—up and down between the cot and the door.

"I haven't faith," she said at last. "I can't trust even Him to look after Jasper as well as I can."

She saw how terribly she had distressed her husband, and she thought he was praying for her.

There was silence in the room, while the palm trees waved outside, and the warm air came in gently through the open door. It was such a beautiful spot, this island, drenched with human blood, and now visited by disease and death.

"I must go to the sick people," Selah said at last. "But I can live in the village at South Creek. I need not come backwards and forwards."

"Couldn't you live at the mission-room?" said Janet, full of compunction, but oh, so greatly relieved to hear that she was not to leave her boy. "I could always put your dinner there for you, and I could hold up Jasper at the window for you to see whiles."

"Janet," said Selah, making one last appeal, "won't you trust God and do your duty? Already these people are dying of the fever, and they know nothing of how to treat it. A woman's nursing might save many lives. God never gives us any work but that He will see us through it. The child is in His hands, wherever he may be."

"We must use our reason," said Janet doggedly;

and no one could have guessed that her pleasant face could look so white and stern. "The native girls don't know what to give a Christian child to eat, far less are they able to see to him; and Jasper screams if they come near him. Who knows but that they might give him to be killed and eaten some night! And how could I come backwards and forwards? If the fever is so bad I'd be bound to carry it tae him, and that canna be my duty."

"You could not carry the fever if God willed otherwise," said Selah.

Miracle was to his mind so much stronger, so much more reasonable even, than natural law.

"I'll not tempt Him," said Janet.

She knew that every word she uttered was hurting her husband, and making a breach between them.

"There are five women already down with the fever," said Selah; "and one of them is poor Noula, whose baby died last week. Every one has fled from her. She is quite alone."

Noula was one of the few natives whom Janet liked.

She wrung her hands and walked to the cot again. Jasper was flushed with sleep, and for one awful moment, when Janet's heart stood still, she thought that perhaps already he had got the fever. In an agony she flung aside the net over the cot, and felt his hands and feet and his cool forehead, and listened to his regular breathing. But that moment of agony decided her, if she had ever wavered. She would say something that would make Selah leave her at home.

"If it was the girl you loved, would you have asked her to come with you?" she said; and she held her breath after she had spoken.

The silence that succeeded her words was awful.

In a flash Selah saw the sweet, homely land of Kent, and the girl in pink cotton and with the innocent gray eyes. He almost felt again the cool, soft English air, and smelt the sleepy smell of the hops, and saw the oast-houses with their red roofs and white cows against the blue sky. And once again he heard a young man's voice, saying, with tender carefulness, "Don't come to the hoppers' children; they have measles."

The silence was becoming an agony.

"No," said Selah at last, in a low voice; "I believe I would not have asked her to come."

And that is how Janet won the day. It was a horrid victory.

She had never before realized that her husband was not her lover. He had been so kind to her—so infinitely patient. And she had Jasper. There had never been any feeling of blankness in her heart. She knew that Selah had loved a girl long ago, but until to-day she had never given the matter a thought. It was all long ago and past, and her reference to Constance was a bow drawn at a venture. It stunned her a little when she had forced him to speak the truth.

"It's little he cares," she said to herself with a dry sob, "whether I get the fever or no." In this, not gauging her husband's spirituality, nor understanding that for himself, as well as for her, it seemed to him so much more reasonable that self-sacrifice—the cutting off of the right hand or foot—should be their rule of conduct, rather than that duty should be neglected—that the whole body should perish.

The two did not kiss each other at parting. Their motives for not doing so were different. Janet had got her first glimpse of "the other woman," and had recoiled from the sight in sharpest pain. She had something to forgive (however long ago it happened, the wife feels outraged in that her husband's heart was not always her own), and Janet had not forgiven. Under such circumstances to kiss would have been a mockery. But the not kissing was of greater import than kissing had ever been. It made a crisis in her life which even Selah's first kiss to her had never done. In all the days that followed she was saying to herself, with weary headshakes and silent tears, "He never kissed me."

And Selah, in the anxiety and pain of the moment, had simply forgotten to kiss his wife. He shouldered his medicine-chest, and with a little tea—his only personal indulgence—in his pocket he started for South Creek.

There were twenty fever cases already, and four natives had died. This burning fever was a disease unknown to them before. It drove them wild, and they would walk into the sea to cool their

fiery skins, or dig holes in the damp, cold earth and lie there till they died.

Selah gave most of his attention to the unbelievers. That these men and women who had heard God's call and had turned away, who had been offered salvation, and had declined it, should be going to meet an immediate and final judgment stirred him to a frenzy of effort to save their souls.

If one of them whispered a few dying words of faith, a deadly weight of suspense was lifted from his mind. Even if, in delirium, a heathen breathed one of the hymns, which, with their popular settings, had become favourites on the island, this man, wrestling for their souls and bodies, had hope for them.

He worked day and night, hardly feeling the need of sleep, and using all his skill to combat the deadly disease around him. He was crippled for lack of skilful help; but he never sent and asked Janet again to come.

The fever spread rapidly. Hardly a hut was without its dying or its dead. On Welemki's village it had already laid its hot, death-giving touch, and the Sacred man fired his followers to

frenzy by saying that the people of South Creek had cast their evil spells over them.

He shook his massive, ugly head, with its five hundred plaits of hair, and vowed vengeance on the people of South Creek. The war-conches sounded, and the people cast themselves down before their gods, and yelled for victory.

It was a peaceful, still, summer morning when the two tribes met to do each other to death ; the sea had scarcely a ripple upon it, and the palm-trees never stirred in the soft air. Down by the shore, with the blue waters of the bay making a background to them, the people of South Creek were drawn up in battle array. Welemki's tribe came upon them, dancing and uttering hoarse shrieks.

Like one possessed, Selah ran and stood between the opposing tribes ; his white face was lit with an inward light, and he raised his hand and cried,—

“ My love to you ! My friends, do not this madness. Let no blood be spilt, for my God Jehovah is able to take away this plague ; and no one else has the power to remove it. Peace be to you ! Remember God's word, which saith, ‘ Thou shalt do no murder,’ and return every man to his place.”

The people waited, held not so much by his words as by his air of command and powerful gestures. His tall form looked gigantic amongst the small-made Islanders, and his dominant dark eyes, compelling and fearless, touched them with a feeling of superstitious awe.

Twice when spears were raised he seized them with his bare hands before they could be thrown, and by sheer force he drove back one warrior who rushed forward with a war-club in his hands.

The sun came up over the blue sea while he reasoned and prayed with them, and the baffled chiefs were beginning to skulk away without striking a blow, when a man of Welemki's tribe fell down stricken with fever.

Then they were like mad dogs let loose! They seemed to smell blood, and their eyes gleamed like the eyes of hungry wolves. They yelled, and a shower of spears went whizzing through the air.

Selah fell down between the foes with a spear-wound through his leg and a spear-wound in his head; and some of his Christians had the humanity to drag him out of the *mêlée*, and to send for Janet.

CHAPTER VI.

EVEN as she hastened to her husband's side, Janet turned and looked back; for the wee boy had climbed to the window, and was beating against the pane, shouting and crying for his mother. His face was all wet with tears, and he screamed with terror if the native girl came near him.

Janet waved her hand to him, and pushed on after the messenger who had come for her. The fight was over at South Creek, and the dead bodies were strewing the shore. Janet put her hand over her eyes, and hastened on blindly to the hut where Selah lay. He was still unconscious, and she took him for dead. She hastily felt his hands—she was not the woman to cry out or to moan until she had done all that could be done for her man! She dashed water in his face, and loosened his neck-cloth; got his medicine chest, and gave him such restoratives as she could find; dared the warriors to come near her—in Scottish; Janet

always forgot the Taro language at a crisis—and by-and-by Selah's eyelids fluttered. He turned his head and moaned a little. She dressed his wound and sat by him, watching him. Never had he seemed dearer to her, never more noble. And she had taunted him, and let him go away without a kiss. It was this she thought of all the time; and tenderly, humbly, while he was still unconscious, she bent over him and pressed her lips to his forehead.

It is doubtful whether she would have done so had he been conscious. Never for an instant had she dreamt of having an explanation with him, nor of referring to the scene of that Sunday night. The thing had happened. She had taunted him with his old love, and he had not kissed her. A strong nature accepts facts, and does not try by reacting them to make them other than they are. Besides, Janet was a Scotswoman, one of that nation to whom self-revelation and explanation comes so hard. She could not have gone to her husband and said, "I am sorry," even had she carried an aching regret with her to the grave. And this, not from any pride or hardness of

heart, but because simply she could not have opened the matter again nor "made a fuss." Such natures suffer most. But because Selah was delirious and would never know of her penitence and distress, she stooped down and kissed him tenderly, shyly, as one who craves pardon.

The sick man smiled in his delirium, and murmured, "Constance."

When he was better—and it was wonderful how soon he was creeping about the huts again—Janet stole back to her boy. She made Ada, the native girl, bring down a change of clothes to her to a cave by the shore, and she bathed herself, and washed her long thick hair, before she ventured near him.

But when she entered the house, a glance was sufficient to show her that already all was not well with the child.

He was not at the window where Ada told her he had sat almost ever since his mother left, watching for her and flattening his nose against the glass. He lay in his cot with the cocoa-nut net over the top; his dear little face flushed and burning, and his silky short hair all hot and damp on

his forehead. The bedclothes were crumpled and tossed—not smooth, as Janet would have had them, and his room had a dirty, neglected appearance.

She lifted him out of his bed, and laid him on her knee. She was quite speechless, and when one of the girls spoke to her she did not even hear her. From the first she never had any hope; neither had she any fear. She sat with Jasper on her knee, and waited.

She waited for four whole days and nights, and never once closed her eyes in sleep. There was nothing she did not do for him; but it was a waiting—an active waiting—all the time. She scarcely even thought. Certainly she never looked forward. She watched and waited.

He was hardly ever off her knee, and every day she knew the wasting fever was making him thinner, and his light weight lighter. He was not fretful at all, though he was often restless, and hour after hour Janet walked up and down the room with him, singing softly some childish lullaby with foolish words in it.

If any one had said to her, "The child will die," she would have laughed, if indeed she had under-

stood what was said. But even she never said, "He will get better."

Once, after a long, still day, when the hot air had hardly breathed about the house, and the only sound to be heard had been the patient tramp of her own feet, towards evening, when the sun had flamed into the burnished sea and dusk was creeping over the lonely island, when the girls were milking the goats under the palm trees, and the lamp burnt dimly in the little room, Janet's boy opened his eyes and smiled at her. That was the only day that she broke down.

She was quite alone with the child. No one could be induced to go to the infected village to summon her husband, even if he had been able to walk so far. The wound in his leg crippled him; and often he crawled on his hands and knees from hut to hut, too ill to do more than measure out medicine, and see that it was taken.

On the fourth day he induced some men to carry him to the mission house, and standing on some rising ground, he called to Janet to know how the child did.

Janet laid the boy in his cot, and went to the door, and called softly,—

“He has been very ill, but he is much better to-day—*much* better.” For had not the baby smiled?

Selah was carried back again to the village; and that night when the house was very still, and only the noise of tiny waves breaking against the coral reef broke the lonely silence, Janet Harrison, watching with sleepless eyes, saw a change come over her baby's face. The little lad stretched out his long, thin, tired arms, and flung them round his mother's neck. He opened his eyes, and gave a little, half-startled look, raising his fair eyebrows, and clinging to the dear arms clasped so closely round him. Then the look of fear passed, and he smiled, and died.

Janet closed her little boy's eyes and sat with him still on her knees. She sat thus all night; and when one of the natives peeped in at the window in the morning, he ran to South Creek and told Harrison that both mother and child were dead.

She hardly heeded when Selah arrived. She

had nothing to tell him. She could not have said that Jasper called her "mother" once before he died, and that he had put his wee wasted arms round her neck. That he had done so would ever remain the freshest image in her mind, and everything that ever happened afterwards dated itself from the night the boy died. But she could never tell any one about it. Hers was a speechless grief.

In the long, empty days that followed ; in the weary, long, empty years that were to come ; Janet was never reminded by anything of her little son, for she never for a moment forgot him. No toys of his that she found, no crumpled, stalkless flowers that lay in her Bible, no Sabbath clothes folded away in drawers, ever brought him more vividly before her. It was a daily, hourly longing she had for him, a piteous, wordless cry for the child.

When he was laid in his little grave in the green patch under the cocoa-nut trees which had been his nursery, she planted flowers upon it for something to do ; it did not give her the smallest solace to deck his grave.

Nothing ever gave her any solace. Some people—generally women, I think—get their deathblow like this long years before they die. Janet was like a dead woman. She did her work as before, taught in the schools, and kept the house sweet and clean. She nursed the fever patients, and hoped—if such a dreary longing can be called hope—that she would get the disease and die. She cared not very greatly if her patients died also. She had not become heartless, but she failed to understand why any one cared much to live.

When the black women brought their babies to her to see, she turned away; she could not look at the tiny hands and the big black eyes.

Selah mourned deeply for his little son, but his sorrow was not as of those who have no hope. Sometimes Janet would see him weeping by the little grave, and afterwards, in the little church, would hear him preach to people who could in no wise appreciate them, words of divinest courage and resignation.

Her own grief was of the hopeless sort.

Once Selah reminded her gently—seeing the dumb look of pain in his wife's white face—that

the child was not really lost to her, but only living somewhere else—not far from her, but out of sight.

“Out of sight!” said Janet, clasping her empty arms together. “Ay, and out o’ touch. How can any one say that that’s no tae lose him?”

“God knows best,” said Selah, his eyes full of tears. “At least we know that our boy is happy, Janet. Try and think of him, dear wife, as one of the blessed spirits whom God has called to Himself, before ever it was stained by sin or touched by sorrows.”

“But Jasper was happy here!” cried Janet, “and it’s no a spirit I want, but just my ain wee boy. I want to feel his little airms roun’ my neck, and see him growing, and watch the roses in his cheeks. I want tae dress him up in his braws and tak’ him out for a walk, and feel his wee hand holding my fingers, and the gentle weight of him dragging at me.”

“My poor wife, this is a sore trial for you,” said Selah, laying his hand tenderly on his wife’s hands.

But Janet knew that, in spite of his sympathy, she was alone in her rebellious grief. Selah had

bowed his head with loyal patience to the Divine will. He could look up through his tears and say honestly, reverently, meaning every syllable he uttered: "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

And the Spirit-world had ever been so near him. It was almost more real than his material environment. His little boy never seemed far away from him, and he gave him to One who, as he knew, with passionate faith, loved the child with a love more perfect, more wise, than any earthly love, howsoever wise and tender. Jasper was in the Saviour's keeping, and Selah said, looking upwards with his steadfast eyes, "*It is well with the child.*"

But Janet's arms ached for want of a burden, and all her life afterwards she sought for something wistfully, and never found it.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the long, gray years that followed, the burden of her loneliness was so great that Janet's whole soul cried out with the weight of it. In fancy she went back to her maiden days, and she wove a romance of peace, if not of joy, around them. Her memories were not poetical. No song of soaring lark did she recall; her fancy was not busy with visions of hoary mountain, nor shady glen, nor even of shy primroses beneath a hedge, but just fixed itself on a little house in a dingy street that now seemed like a Paradise she had known and lost.

She began to long for the sight of a white woman's face, the pleasant sound of a white woman's voice. If she could only speak to her mother again, and see the comfortable, gas-lit parlour in Nicholson Street with its, to her, ever cheerful outlook on her neighbours' houses!

"What will they be doing now?" That was

her constant thought, remembering every rule and regulation in her old home, and recalling even the hours of meals and the time of going to bed.

Sitting idle by the window, her thoughts were wont to become a strange jumble of memories and longings.

"It'll be summer time now, and they'll be putting up white curtains. . . . I believe I could tell mother aboot him and the way he died. She aince lost a bairn of her ain. . . . They've got a servant, I hear; but surely she'll no get doing the marketing. . . . It wad be fine tae see shops again. 'Deed, folk never ken, till they're wanting it, the pleasure of a van calling for orders. . . . Mother would never know what he was like from the photograph, for he moved a wee thing, but the robe came out beautiful. . . . If they could just have seen him . . . !"

Dreams of the time when, if he had lived, she would have taken him home to visit the old folk came back to her with an aching sense of what might have been. She saw herself alighting from a cab at the humble door, and Lizzie Thomson

peering through the blinds at No. 18. Grandma on the steps to greet them (but she herself must carry Jasper till they got inside the house—Nicholson Street must see him in his mother's arms). Then tea in the cosy parlour, with its carpet and curtains; and kindly neighbours, in decent bonnets and shawls, just stepping round to see how Mrs. Harrison and her son did.

To-night, as Janet sat in the lonely little room on the sea-girt island—in the room with its bare floor, its pictures and photographs, and its wee empty chair—the vision of that home-coming, robbed for ever of its joy, was too much for her, and she laid her head down on the rough deal table and sobbed as though her heart would break.

“My wee boy, my ain wee Jasper,” she cried, letting the fond, broken words fall from her as a child will do in its sorrow, “if I could just see you once again—only once; and feel your bit airms round my neck, and get ain o’ your bonnie smiles again!”

But the rain beat upon the window, and the palm trees tossed riotously in the blast, and

Jasper slept on peacefully in his little grave under the cocoa-nut trees.

Presently Janet heard her husband's step on the coral path, and she dried her eyes and choked down the strangling sobs.

Selah's eyes were radiant as he entered, and his thin, tired face glowed as though a light shone upon it.

"The island is Christ's!" he cried. "To-day Welemki and his tribe have cast away their idols and have been baptized!" (He was like another Deborah, on fire with the triumph of God's victory.) "The isles waited for Him," he cried; and the joy and exultation in his voice seemed like to burst his throat. "The isles waited for Him, and He has come to claim them for His own. Again the Galilean has triumphed, and He sets Taro as another jewel in His crown."

"Then we can leave!" cried Janet, a gleam almost of happiness in her face. "O Sellah, take me back to 13 Nicholson Street!"

He looked at her blankly—he did not notice that she had been weeping—and her words came like a cold douche on his glowing victory.

Leave the island? Why, the work seemed only just begun, and the new converts would require his constant training, his instant care. He looked at her, still speechless. Again he asked himself, as Janet had once asked him, "Would you do it for Constance?" Would she have asked it? He did not know. But he knew that he had a duty towards God, and a duty towards his wife, and the two were directly opposed to each other, while they were both insistent, both compelling, both reasonable. On the one hand, a woman's natural longing for home and his own desire to please her; on the other, the care and training of immortal souls.

He went to his room and prayed. His brief flush of victory was over, quenched by the worry of indecision and the perplexity of divided duty.

With all his heart he desired to please Janet, and to console her in her sorrow; but his was too strong a nature to shift the responsibility of a decision on to another's shoulders, and to say, "I will go if you like;" neither was he the man to say, "The woman tempted me." Nevertheless, he knew that if they left Taro

now, years of work would be undone, heathen practices would be resumed, and Janet, he firmly believed, would be everlastingly remorseful for having counselled desertion. The decision lay with him, and he faced it with the fine singleness of mind of the man who never turns his back.

“Janet,” he said that evening—and he went and sat beside her, and took her hand in his; he would have given so much to have been able to do as she wished; he so wanted to be good to this woman, who had linked her life with his—“Janet, we did not come here to do our own wills, but the will of Him who sent us. My wife, no one ever gave up home, or land, or friends, for His sake, whom He will not abundantly reward in His own way, and in His own good time. Will you give up your home for the present, until the converts are more strengthened in their faith, and the native teachers can be trusted to preach?”

“Verra well,” said Janet. From the quiet way in which she spoke she might have been assenting to some trifling arrangement in which she took but little interest. She had hardly hoped that Selah

would take her home. Hope was too joyful, too active a sensation for her tired heart. "Verra well," she said; and Selah, with a load off his mind, went out in the dark to pray by a dying bed.

And the months passed by. Autumn storms raged and blustered round the little house and tore off its roof; and the summer heat burnt up the grass on the island and withered all the flowers on Jasper's grave.

The Taro islanders wore respectable clothing now, and had learnt some simple industries, and Selah was busy finishing his translation of the Bible into Taroese. He had worked at it doubly hard this burning, hot summer, for he was determined to complete it before the winter came. In the winter he would take Janet for a trip home.

"Take time, Sellah," Janet said. "Ye'r just getting into a fever of work."

He smiled at her. (He smiled more often now than he used to do, but ever it was the smile of a man who sees visions—an expression not of this earth at all.)

"We cannot tell when the night may come," he said.

When he was finishing the last chapters of the Book of Revelation his excitement grew intense. The limited vocabulary of the Taroese dialect was not sufficient to express the glories of John's vision in Patmos; but Selah's trembling hand seemed to give to the simple words living force and fire. It was but a thin veil that divided the New Jerusalem from him, and his glowing imagination and faith could almost see and describe the gates of pearl and the shining streets of the city.

On the day that he finished the last chapter Janet found him in his little study, with his head fallen forward on his paper, and the pen still wet in his hand.

"My man," she cried, "what is it? What have they done to you?" (For she never trusted the natives.)

She laid him down on the floor, and presently got two of the islanders to help her lift him on to the bed.

The powerful brain had been overstrained, and the ill-nourished, eager body was wasted with toil, and could not sustain it. He lay in bed and babbled like a child.

That was the pitiful part of it—the keen intelligence blunted, the vigour gone, the strong soul weak of will, the mystic prattling of the steeplechases he had won at Melbury Races!

“O God,” said Janet, “we are far through! Do send some one to help me and Sellah.”

And the same day a yacht swung into the bay—an English yacht, clean and trim, lying like a bird with folded wings on the clear, blue water. Janet wondered if her head were going when she saw it. She had last seen such a craft in the river Clyde.

A slender, varnished gig shot out from the yacht's side; the crew had on white jumpers, and carried pistols in their belts. In the stern of the boat sat a young man with the white tiller-ropes in his hand, and his face under his peaked cap was fearless and frank.

Janet ran down and met them on the shore. And the first person that the armed crew of the gig saw when they landed was a homely Scotch-woman, dressed in the fashion of ten years ago—a woman with fair hair turned gray, who held out beseeching hands to them, and down whose face the hot tears rained.

She could not speak when one of the crew addressed her, calling her "Ma'am" (dear title of long ago!), and asking her where the famous well of water on Taro was, and if they might fill *Corisande's* casks from it. She called herself the foolish body that she could not speak, but no words came. Only when the boy who held the white tiller ropes stepped ashore, and, touching his peaked cap, said courteously, "I am so sorry to trouble you; is the well far from here?" some tension gave way in Janet's throat, and she said, with a sob that hurt the boy, "I prayed you would come. I'm all my lane, and my man is dying."

"Let me do what I can for you," said the boy impulsively. He was a blue-eyed boy with sandy curls. "Can I fetch you anything from the yacht? There is a doctor on board. I'll go back for him. Is your husband very ill?"

"Give way!" He was in the stern again, and the long oars of the gig dipped with smooth, feathered strokes in the clear water as the slender boat shot to the yacht's side again.

The natives were gathering in hundreds on the

shore to see the strange visitors, and canoes put off and rowed round the vessel.

The doctor came ashore, and a white-haired old gentleman who looked ill. They and the boy walked up the steep path together to the mission house, and the white-haired old gentleman drew aside at the door and let his doctor enter. He himself, with the uninquisitive courtesy of an Englishman, waited outside with the boy.

"What a strange place!" he said; "what a strange banishment for an Englishman, even a missionary, to choose!"

"I think I remember hearing about him at Sydney," said the boy. "Do you remember, uncle, the Stevens said they thought there was a missionary here when they told us about the well?"

"Yes; I think I do remember. Didn't they say that he hadn't left the island for about twenty years?"

"Except to go home and get a wife, because the Missionary Society said he couldn't have girls' schools unless he was married!" said the boy, smiling.

"The woman whom we saw must be his wife. Here is Fergusson.—Well, doctor, what news?"

"Dying," said the doctor briefly. "He probably won't last more than a day or two."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Lord Napier kindly. "Can nothing be done, Fergusson?"

"Nothing. One pities the woman."

Janet came to the door and beckoned to the boy.

"I want you to come ben for a moment and tell me what he says," she said.

And the boy took off his cap and followed her into the house.

"Just say it," she said, and most people would have said her voice was calm.

The boy could only nod.

"My little son is buried out there," said Janet. And the boy knew that she meant that when her husband should die she had nothing left to her.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER dinner was over on board the *Corisande* the boy said to his uncle, as they smoked on deck,—

“I want you to allow me to stay on Taro at the mission house until it's all over with that poor chap. Fergusson says it can't be long.”

“You won't do any good, I am afraid. And doubtless Mrs. Harrison has faithful coloured servants to help her.”

“You could pick me up after you have had your little cruise amongst the islands.”

“As you like. I can leave Fergusson too, if you think it would do any good.”

“Fergusson says he can do nothing.”

“You'll be all right, I suppose? The natives seem to be a civilized lot. But who could ever have induced them to cover up their fine forms in such utterly grotesque garments?”

The boy laughed as he swung himself into the dinghy.

"Don't come and teach them heterodoxy!" he cried.

"Æsthetics," corrected the old gentleman. "Have you got all you want?"

"I am taking some brandy, and Fergusson has given me some directions to follow. Don't let them beat you at whist when I'm not there."

The dinghy slipped ashore in the darkness, and the boy walked up the steep pathway, with its broken coral gleaming faintly in the gloom, till he reached the house and saw Janet's light burning in the window.

"You must let me take a turn at watching him," he said, when she had admitted him. He did not tell her that the yacht was going away without him. "Will you lie down to-night? I can call you if he wants you."

Janet submitted. Nothing surprised her since the yacht had come in answer to her prayers—not even a midnight visit from an English boy.

"You'll be sure to call me if there is a change?" she said, and gave him one piteous look. Then she

lay down in the outer room, and was soon sleeping the deep sleep of exhaustion.

The sick man was very restless. He clutched at his breast and moaned, till the boy, fearing he had some hurt there, gently unbuttoned the collar of his night-shirt and opened it down the front. What he saw was not a hurt or sore, but a thin gold chain with a flat locket attached to it. And the boy closed the night-shirt again with a shamed feeling as though he had betrayed a man's secret.

All night long Selah Harrison lay and clutched the locket, moaning in his sleep when by a restless movement he lost his hold of it. Twice the boy replaced it reverently in the thin, long hands, and the sick man grew calm again.

Towards morning he seemed to rally, and the boy fetched some goat's milk, and mixing it with some brandy, held it to the hot, dry lips. It seemed to revive him. He opened his eyes and looked fixedly at the boy. He felt for the locket, and then lay quiet, like a man who thinks consciously. The boy was saying to himself,—

“We may pull him through yet. He's not a bit delirious now, only weak.”

He was startled, however, when the invalid spoke to him in a quiet, natural voice.

"I do not know how you came here, my friend," Selah said; "but I think God must have sent you to help my poor wife."

"I came in a yacht," said the boy simply.

"Will you do something for me?" said Selah.

"Yes, indeed," said the boy—"anything I can, sir. But you oughtn't to talk, ought you?"

"I have a locket here," said the sick man. "I fear I have not strength to unclasp the chain. Will you do it for me?"

The boy undid the clasp.

Selah held the locket in his hand for a moment after it was unclasped from his neck. He seemed to lose hold of himself again, and said regretfully, excusingly, looking up at the boy, with eyes that were clouding,—

"It is not very like her, and Mrs. Harrison knows I have it."

He lay so quiet again that the boy thought he had fainted. He pressed the brandy and milk to his lips, and was going to call the sleeping woman in the room beyond, when he

heard the quiet voice beginning again, in stronger accents,—

“I want you to take—to take”—his voice failed him a little, and he gasped painfully—“to take this picture and throw it into the sea. Will you do this?”

His strength failed, and he fell to his babbling talk again.

“I loved her so; I loved her so,” he said. Then —“It isn’t fair on Janet. . . . But it is not very like her. . . . I have thought too much of her. . . . Is she there? She often used to come and sit beside me in the old, wild days when the natives threw spears at me through the window. . . . She is not there, is she? I thought I heard her voice. . . . A man may not love one woman when he is married to another. . . . I must give up my locket. . . . If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. . . . She was lovable above all other women, I think. . . . I could not let her go to the fever patients. . . . No; it was measles, I think, down in Kent, when the hops were in bloom.”

He turned in his hard bed, and looked with blank, unseeing eyes at the boy.

"I did not dance with her that night when she asked me. . . . I think it hurt her, for her eyes were full of tears when she turned away, and she dropped her pretty hands to her sides. . . . Janet knows I would not have allowed my love to go to South Creek. She too is unhappy. . . . But perhaps if I give up my locket . . . I should not have kept it so long. . . . God forgive me. . . . I have not made Janet happy. . . . Our little son——"

He appeared to doze again, and when he opened his eyes he was brighter and clear of mind again.

"Have you thrown the miniature into the sea?" he asked, in a firm, natural voice.

"No," said the boy; and then he added, stumbling with shyness, "I don't think I'd throw away your locket, sir. You're not very well, you know, and fellows always imagine things when they are ill. I don't think you need give up your locket if you're fond of it."

"Cast it away! cast it away!" prayed Selah, and his voice rose.

Janet came flying into the room, and Selah fainted.

When they had restored him a little, and he was sleeping again, the two stood by him; and the boy, with the trinket still in his hand, whispered to Janet,—

“He tells me to throw this into the sea.”

It was the first time that Janet had ever seen the locket, though she knew he always wore it, and she had sometimes caught sight of the chain round his neck.

“He aye loved her better than me,” she said; and her face was like stone, and her heart was breaking.

They watched by him. Neither of them thought he would ever recover consciousness again. The restlessness had returned, and he clutched ever at his breast, and the tears broke through his closed lids and lay on his cheek.

“Give it back to him,” said Janet.

Perhaps she also made the great renunciation.

“He may be clear in his mind again,” said the boy. “Do you mind taking the locket and saying something about some one having picked it up and brought it back?”

“I canna touch it,” said Janet.

The boy took the little case reverently, and saw the sweet girl-face of his mother, as it used to be.

"I'll heat a little milk, if you will watch him," said Janet, as the boy stood by with the miniature in his hand.

"Have you thrown the miniature into the sea yet?" asked Selah, from the bed; his voice was almost a whisper now.

"God has sent you back your miniature," said the boy. "I think, sir, He must intend you to keep it."

Selah, half dazed, took it in his hands; and the boy propped him up in bed with his strong arm, for his breathing was becoming difficult.

"She was my mother," he said. "She died two years ago."

"I shall meet her," said the dying man, a look of radiant joy overcoming the expression of pain in his face. "Was she happy?" he whispered.

"I don't know." No one had ever asked him before if his mother was happy. "She was awfully good," he said.

But it is doubtful if Selah heard his answer.

He was lying quite happy, unconscious of his surroundings, unconscious of everything save that God had restored his locket. Even in his delirium he accepted "signs," and a miracle was no matter of wonder to the man who had seen so many miracles.

"Try a drop of milk, Sellah," said Janet; and she tried to feed him with a spoon, as she used to feed Jasper.

But Selah's lips were cold already, and his voice was far away.

"Such pretty hands—such pretty hands," he was murmuring; and so murmuring, his spirit passed away.

* * * * *

The crew of the yacht buried him beside his little boy, when *Corisande* came back to the bay, and Lord Napier took Janet on board of her as far as Sydney on her way home.

She used to have long talks with the boy on deck when the stars were few and the darkness hid her face. He was so patient, and would talk to her by the hour of Selah and his life of selfless heroism.

"Yes," said Janet, the night the yacht sailed away from Taro, and she took her very last look at the two graves under the cocoanut trees. "But Selah had his religion, and once a girl loved him. I never had anything but the boy."

The old loyalty to her husband awoke again, the old admiration for the man whom she had shown off at tea-parties in Nicholson Street and had walked with at Roseneath.

"If only you could ha' heard him preach or known what he was like! I never heard aught but good words from him till the end, and I aye thought Sellah wad have had sic a gran' deathbed."

"I suppose it's the life that counts," said the boy, with a blush, and was aware that he had put it very badly.

"'Deed yes," said Janet; "and there's One will be saying, 'Well done!' to him this day."

Somewhat the same ideas were filling the thoughts of both, for both were simple-minded people, with their heaven fashioned after Bible picture-books, and with material streets of gold. Both were seeing in their minds the same picture of a tired

man who had fought well, entering a glorious city, and some kind-faced, beautiful Saviour meeting him at the pearly gates, and saying, as His smile awoke an answering smile on the worn face, "Well done: thou hast been faithful."

"And that does count for something," said the boy.

THE END.

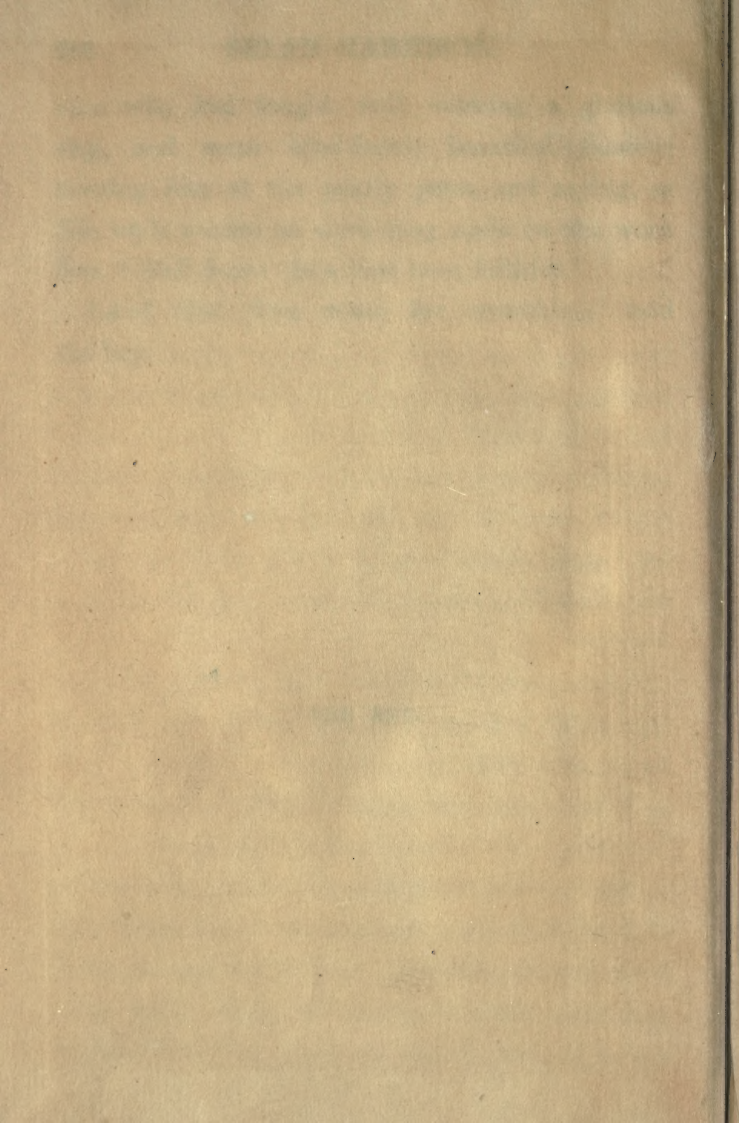
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